1607/1722

John Ellis Africa

THE GENERAL LOVER,

OR

SMALL-TALKER,

A SERIES OF

LETTERS

FROM

A LADY

IN THE

WEST of ENGLAND

TO

LADY ANNE D——,

ABROAD.

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LETTER I.

EVER ſince I had the happineſs of ſeeing your Ladyſhip in town, and being admitted to the honour of your confidence, I have acquired to myſelf a degree of importance which, 'till that period, I had no pretenſions to indulge—alas! even now, how little reaſon for vanity!—mortifying idea!—if I plume my feathers, it is for another's, not my own qualifications—I have no merit, unleſs in the title of your friend—I tell my proud heart, to conſole it under ſo humiliating a circumſtance, that it is indebted for its preſent conſequence to no leſs a perſon than the celebrated Lady Anne D———.

For heaven's ſake, madam, ſtrip me not of the valuable robe under

which I hide my deficiencies, and for which alone I am diſtinguiſhed—I will preſerve it carefully—have it ever in my eye—and uſe it only on particular occaſions—it ſhall be kept free from the ruſt of reſerve, from the moth of ſuſpicion, and even time itſelf ſhall not rub it out, whilſt your Ladyſhip permits me to lodge it in the wardrobe of my heart.

Three weeks I have been a viſitor of the Dowager Lady Randal, who has ſome particularities in her humour that does not render my ſituation perfectly deſirable — family reaſons oblige me to dedicate a good deal of my time to her Ladyſhip, and, I endeavour to make the ſacrifice without murmuring.

We are here ſurrounded by many well-meaning families, with whom, though they have not ſeen much of the beau monde, I might paſs my hours agreeably enough, if I could ſelect from the number ſuch as I approve,

prove, and avoid thoſe I diſreliſh, but am not ſufficient miſtreſs of myſelf to do this, whilſt under the protection of Lady Randal.

Adieu, madam, my moſt pleaſing ſolace, whilſt I continue in this country, will be to think of, and to write to, you inceſſantly.

LETTER II.

DID your Ladyſhip ever hear of a female knight-errant—I believe the character may be new—but I have abſolutely enter'd the right honourable liſt, and hope to relieve many a credulous maiden — yes, my Lady, I hope to relieve them from that kind of infatuation, which is next to enchantment, cauſing them to run blindly againſt the rock of diſappointment.

Being ſituated remote from the grand menagerie, where a certain miſchievous animal, call'd a SMALL-TALKER, is no phenomenon; I felt ſomething like horror, blended with pity, when inform'd that one of them had taken up his quarters in this retir'd neighbourhood, and daily made vaſt ravages amongſt the hearts of our roſy-cheek'd damſels, who, poor unſuſpecting victims, ſeeing him walk erect — hearing him

ſpeak

ſpeak in the ſame language with themſelves — and finding him poſſeſs'd of other human faculties — gaz'd — liſten'd — admir'd —— and thought him the moſt civilized creature in the creation.

When firſt it was told me this deſtructive animal had made his appearance, which happen'd in a large circle of my own ſex, and hearing him ſpoke of with delight, rather than terror, Lord bleſs me! cry'd I, how much you are miſtaken, ladies, why the kind of creature you talk of ſo compoſedly is the moſt dangerous in the world: for heaven's ſake! let us take up arms and drive him from the neighbourhood, for if you ſuffer him to ſtay much longer, I perceive when he does go, he will carry your peace with him.

It was ſtrange to ſee how every countenance alter'd, as I pronounc'd theſe words, one of them, an inexperienc'd thing of about ſeventeen, colour'd exceſſively, and ſaid, indeed

ſhe could not, for her part, ſee the great danger there was in diverting themſelves with a creature ſo very gentle. — Poor girl, thought I, I fear you are already in his ſnare, then turning towards her, with a look of compaſſion which I felt glowing on my cheeks, I ſaid, as you value your repoſe, madam, truſt not his ſubtle ſmiles, his inſinuating words, leſt inſtead of gentle, you are compel'd to call him ſavage.

She did not receive this warning with the gratitude it demanded, and, I could eaſily diſcern, there were others in company equally unintimidated; however, knowing I had often been at the grand menagerie, conſequently not ſo much a ſtranger as themſelves, to the different ſpecies with which it is fill'd, ſome of my fair auditors gave implicit faith to my report, whilſt thoſe, who wiſhed not to believe it, veil'd their ſentiments, and with pretended warmth, railed againſt the SMALL-TALKER. LET-

LETTER III.

EVERY rural amuſement which the approaching ſpring invites me to partake of—I neglect—I diſregard.—I think of nothing but purſuing and running down the ſly animal, who every day grows more and more formidable.—If I was not to buckle on my armour againſt him the conqueſt he is hourly gaining would ſoon depopulate this place of female inhabitants, and a Margaret's grimly ghoſt would be met in every corner.

I know but of one trap which can enſnare this common enemy, and when I have nicely fitted and trimm'd it out, your Ladyſhip ſhall ſee how prettily I will allure him to his fate!—once ſecur'd, if I do not pay him home for all his miſchievous pug tricks, may I be tumbled from the higheſt ſummit of chivalry!

Ludicrouſly as I treat this character, my amiable friend, I cannot ſeriouſly reflect on it without horror.—How ſtrangely cruel, that men, who are not entirely devoid of ſentiment —of humanity—of underſtanding—ſhould ſacrifice to their pride, caprice, or amuſement, the tender affections of an innocent unſuſpecting boſom.

Obſerve, madam, when I condemn this ſet of men, I do not confound with them every one who is addicted to ſaying civil things:—there is in ſome a kind of gallantry which has nothing cruel in its nature —— even whilſt they deify our charms, calling us goddeſſes, angels, and run over the whole ſmall-talker's liſt of eyes, flames, darts, &c. they convince us, by a certain gaiety of countenance, a certain careleſſneſs of expreſſion, that they intend only a few lively ſallies, which to miſconſtrue would be the height of vain ſtupidity.

Can

Can your Ladyſhip remember our ramble to Kenſington gardens? and do you ſuppoſe, when Major ——— proteſted to my ſiſter, that for her ſake he would exalt himſelf on one of the higheſt elms, or plunge into the deepeſt part of the canal, that ſhe congratulated herſelf on the acquiſition of a lover? — No, no, my dear Lady Anne! this agreeable flow of humour is not the deep ſilent river which conceals deſtructive eddies fatal to credulous females.—My vengeance is preparing for that kind of ſmall-talker, who, with a tender, ſerious air, will flatter and ſmile himſelf into a heart only to ſteal out of it what is moſt valuable; neither has he the excuſe of a common robber; his theft is committed through mere wantonneſs; — he neglects his ſpoil — often making its unguarded owner the object of contempt and ridicule.

If I go on with thinking of thoſe

wretches and their deſerts, when I get one of them in my power, poſitively there will be no end to his puniſhment.

LET-

LETTER IV.

A Few weeks, my dear Lady Anne, and I wing to town, with an eclat ſurpaſſing what I can expreſs; but how would my tranſports be increas'd, if, at the end of my journey, I might be aſſur'd of embracing your Ladyſhip! — Why are we parted by the envious ſeas? —By writing continually I will try to repair the cruel wrongs I ſuffer from a ſeparation I often, very often, regret.— A thouſand times ſince you left this iſland have I wiſh'd, that the place to which you hurried had been acceſſible by land: nothing but a horrid voyage prevented my ſiſter and myſelf from being of your party; — it coſt us many ſighs that we could not accept an invitation ſo much to our advantage.

Whilſt I ſcribble the dictates of my heart, imperceptibly have I loſt ſight of what a moment before en-

gag'd

gag'd my attention; but now I have told your Ladyſhip how ſincerely I am attach'd to you, I return again to my dear project with new acquired eagerneſs.

Have I yet ſeen the deſtin'd victim? —

No, indeed! My pique againſt him is not perſonal.

How do I propoſe to get him in my power? —

Peace, my dear inquiſitive Lady Anne! If you did not know my face, I would tell you I had there materials enough for triumph: — I would exactly reverſe it from what it really is: — I would call my complexion fair and blooming — my hair light and luxuriant — my eyes blue and ſparkling — my other features regular and animated; — but as your Ladyſhip is too well acquainted with my yellow coarſe ſkin — lank brown hair —

hair — dark unmeaning eyes — large irregular inanimated features, I will not attempt to impoſe on you a falſe appearance.

Is not your wonder rais'd, that ſuch a homely maiden ſhould preſume, in her own form, to attack the invincible SMALL-TALKER, or even hope to engage his attention, having no external, and but a moderate ſhare of internal allurements.—Preſumptuous as you may call me, I have actually enter'd the liſt, and flatter myſelf that, at the aſſembly this evening, I ſhall encounter the enemy. — You remember what few forces David took with him when he went againſt the mighty giant of Gath, and you know too he came off with ſucceſs. — Now, who can ſay with the creature, whoſe darling paſſion is apparently change, that a ſmiling look ſent from a new face, plain as it is, may not be as effectual as the unerring pebble from the ſling of the wiſe prophet. — I long, however, to have

have one tryal of ſkill:—if I am miſtreſs of a ſingle charm, it ſhall be call'd out to my aſſiſtance.—On the toilet lies my armour:—I go to put it on.—My heart does not fail, which I take to be no bad omen.

Now, Lady Anne, I am arm'd at all points.—Adieu!—I haſten to the field of battle with an air of eager impatience.—Pray for the good of the cauſe!—Pray that I return crown'd with laurels!

LET-

LETTER V.

MOrtify'd beyond expreſſion — be at the next aſſembly — gone to town on buſineſs of importance — with theſe rumours my ears were ſaluted, when I entered the room — miſtaken damſels! believe not his well-feign'd tale of buſineſs — credit not his promiſe of return — I have loſt all my penetration if you ever ſee him more — he has amus'd himſelf long enough with your credulity — he flies in purſuit of new conqueſts — I cannot be your champion girls — I regret that he will not give me an opportunity. — Upon my word, Lady Anne, I am piqued to leave my plan unfiniſhed — what can be ſaid in this caſe? — why moſt heartily do I ſay, the warmeſt wiſh of my heart is, that wherever he goes, he may find ſome woman of ſpirit who will execute it for me.

Why

Why is it I feel ſuch reſentment when I think of this man? — and ſomething whiſpers me I ſhall not always remain a ſtranger to him — yet I ſincerely believe he is gone, not to return, and where elſe then am I likely to meet him? — a falſe preſentment this, which tells me, I ſhall not be diſappointed of my vengeance.

Lady Randal, naturally of a melancholy, ſedentary, diſſatisfy'd humour, has for a fortnight paſt been almoſt inſupportable. — I do not, my dear Lady, I do not love this woman, there is a ſtern haughtineſs about her, to me very diſguſting — gratitude is a binding principle, or it would not bind me to her Ladyſhip, a moiety of my time, as it has done the laſt five years of my life: — her huſband was a good man, and nearly related to our family — I revere his memory, and would not for the world, if I could poſſibly avoid it, offend Lady Randal; — amongſt other ſtrange whims ſhe has taken

it

it into her head, that I have too much vivacity, ſo from ſingular good motives, keeps me with her ſix months out of the twelve; yet I thank my ſtars, and bleſs my patience, with all her prudiſh, wiſe lectures, ſhe has not teaz'd me out of one ſingle grain of that chearfulneſs, which being perfectly innocent, I do not bluſh to ſay is habitual to me.

What a happineſs do I eſteem it to write to your Ladyſhip without reſerve — I hate every thing like art or affectation — I admire a virtuous frankneſs—and I love you ſincerely.

LET-

LETTER VI.

I Never felt greater ſurprize or pleaſure than I have this day experienc'd — felicitate me, my amiable friend — I ſhall no longer regret my ſituation — this dreary place will be no longer irkſome — the capricious humour of Lady Randal will not now be half ſo intolerable — Heaven has ſent a companion to ſhare it with me. —

The appearance of this ſtranger at Randal farm has ſpread a cloud of myſtery before my eyes, which their moſt penetrating beams could not diſſipate.

I never heard Lady Randal ſpeak of any relations ſhe had abroad, yet this morning her Ladyſhip introduc'd to me a niece — a Sophia Dighton — juſt come to England — bred from infancy in France — never here it ſeems

ſeems before — their meeting bore a myſterious aſpect — I'll tell you, madam, how it happen'd, as I think it wears ſomething of the air of an adventure:

Juſt as the firſt dinner bell had ſummon'd us to our ſober meal, and which with ſober faces and ſober talk, we ſat expecting in the dining-room: the rattling of a carriage up the court-yard, drew me to the window; and I cried out, Bleſs me! your Ladyſhip is going to have viſitors, who, if you may gueſs, by the dirtyneſs of their chaiſe, do not come a very ſhort journey. —

Viſitors to me child! riſing from her chair primly and advancing — I expect no viſitors.

As ſhe ſaid this, out of the carriage ſtept a young lady, follow'd by an old woman, who ſeem'd to be her attendant, and both were proceeding to the houſe; when turning

to-

towards Lady Randal, I ſaw her face overſpread with a ſudden, and deadly paleneſs — I aſk'd her Ladyſhip if ſhe ailed any thing, and would have pulled the bell, but ſtopping me, ſhe ſaid it was only a little dizzineſs in her head — I will go to my cloſet child, continued ſhe — I ſhall ſoon recover myſelf — in the meantime, I will leave you to do the honours of my houſe.

Saying this, ſhe retired, nor would ſuffer me to attend her farther than the door.

I waited with the utmoſt impatience, expecting every moment when the ſtranger would make her appearance — ten minutes elaps'd and I was ſtill alone — I confeſs myſelf ſurpriſed, and was going to apply myſelf to the bell, when one from Lady Randal's apartment was rung with ſuch violence, that I forgot my purpoſe and ran directly up ſtairs.

Enter-

Entering her chamber precipitately, the firſt object that ſtruck my view was the young perſon I had ſeen alight from the chaiſe, laid on a ſopha in a ſtrong fainting fit; Lady Randal ſtanding by her with a countenance more expreſſive of anger than compaſſion, whilſt, the old woman, her attendant, expreſs'd the moſt frantic ſorrow.

As ſoon as I enter'd, Lady Randal quitted the room, telling me, ſhe would be glad if I would ſtep to her chamber, when I had ſeen her niece, taken proper care of.

I ſtarted at the mention of her niece, not having ever before heard that ſhe had one; however, I did not ſtay to aſk any queſtions — indeed I had not room for one curious wiſh — Pity was the only ſentiment of my ſoul! — and I flew to the perſon who excited it with the ſame eagerneſs as if ſhe had been my ſiſter.

The

The firſt thing I did was to pour drops and water down her throat, on which ſhe began to ſhew ſome ſigns of life; I then took from her head a white riding hat, the warmth of which might retard her recovery — though it was extremely elegant and decorated with a large blue feather, yet it was an ornament from which ſhe was very far from receiving advantage; on the contrary, it concealed more charms than I had ever before ſeen aſſembled in one perſon: — her hair was almoſt as fine as ſun beams, and a perfect auborn eſcaping from under a a ſmall lac'd hood fell upon her delicate ſhoulders, in the moſt beautiful diſorder, whilſt the ſoftneſs of her ſkin, and regularity of her features, made me think her the moſt lovely creature that excelling nature ever ſent us of her works; — a Brunſwick habit, which was alſo blue, I open'd at the hands and boſom to give her air, and the more I ſaw, the more my opinion was confirm'd.

I wiſh,

I wiſh, Lady Anne, I could convey to you an idea of this young beauty; yet lovely as ſhe is, I can already diſcern Lady Randal is by no means partial to her. — Good God! how unaccountable.

Having drawn up the fringed curtains under which were conceal'd eyes that eloquently ſpoke, full of ſweetneſs, full of expreſſion, ſhe turn'd the inſinuating orators towards me, and, by them, ſent ſuch tender acknowledgments, that I could ſcarce reſtrain an impulſe to embrace her with the freedom of a ſettled friendſhip.

There is ſomething irreſiſtible in this girl — but Lady Randal — indeed I like her leſs than ever — ſhe had certainly given her charming niece a very unkind reception; — or why was ſhe reduc'd to the deplorable ſituation in which I found her? — or why ſtarts the tears to her fair eyes, whenever ſhe encounters

thoſe

thoſe of her auſtere aunt? — mercy, Heaven! I have hardly patience to think of ſuch inſenſibility! yet ſhe told me, when I went to attend her, that the diſorder of Miſs Dighton proceeded only from the fatigue of her journey, and added, that the reaſon why ſhe had not mention'd her having ſuch a relation was owing to an antipathy ſhe had taken againſt the young lady's parents, who had behaved ſo very ill that ſhe had reſolv'd to diſown them, and their connections; but now, continued her Ladyſhip, as the girl's father and mother are dead, and as ſhe throws herſelf on my protection, I ſhall, if I find ſhe deſerves well, endeavour to forget what has paſs'd, and take her to my favour. — After ſaying this, ſhe went with me to the reviving Sophia, and, embracing her, repeated the ſame aſſurance.

Indulgent Heaven protect her! — I don't know why, but I have no great

great reliance on her Ladyſhip — there is a certain coolneſs in her looks which contradicts every expreſſion of kindneſs.

C LET-

LETTER VII.

I Am juſt inform'd my dear Lady Anne has ſent her ſweet boy to England.—I have heard ſo much of the pretty charmer, that I long to ſee him—I long to have him throw his little arms about my neck.—Whilſt I give him a thouſand kiſſes, believe me, his excellent mother will not be abſent from my thoughts.—At that moment I ſhall particularly have you before me—and tenderly embrace you in idea; —neither ſhall I forget him who ſhares with you in the bleſſing:—I ſhall think of Mr. D———, though I have not the honour of being perſonally known to him.

Lady Randal has again deſtroyed all my opening views of enjoyment. —I have no ſooner met the agreeable Sophia, than I am to loſe her. —I am warn'd of this blow juſt as I have contracted for her the ſtrongeſt

ſtrongeſt prepoſſeſſions of regard.—How I revere her old attendant!—What faithfulneſs—what love!—what care!—I think a mother cannot be fonder of an only child, than Hannah of Miſs Dighton.—Poor young lady! her health I fear is in a declining ſtate; her aunt's reaſon this for obliging her to change the air. She has, it ſeems, been much worſe ſince ſhe came hither;—indeed, I believe the ſituation of the farm very badly calculated for her diſorder, which is a ſettled weakneſs, a melancholy depreſſion, for which I fear ſhe has ſome hidden cauſe. Whatever it is, moſt ſincerely do I wiſh it far—far remov'd from her!

Why will not Lady Randal go with her?—or, at leaſt, why not ſuffer me to attend her?—Her Ladyſhip will hear of neither:—ſhe would not, for the univerſe, ſleep a night from the farm—and my company, it ſeems, cannot be diſpens'd

with; ſo, in oppoſition to all I can ſay, Sophia will ſet out in a few days for another houſe of her aunt's, about thirty miles from this, attended only by Hannah.

What greatly amazes me is, the rapture with which this ſcheme is embrac'd by the young lady—ſolitude is a bleſſing her heart pants to obtain. — Why does ſhe declare this?—Why at the ſame time aſſure me my friendſhip is not unacceptable to her?—Ah, my lovely girl! if I can judge the ſtate of your heart, England has no ſpot, be the air or ſituation ever ſo pure, ever ſo inviting, that will be efficacious to your malady: --- return to France; the health you ſeek is more likely to be found there:---a thouſand ſighs have told me you are there attach'd:--- the tender languiſhment of your intelligent eyes confirms this opinion.

Had we continued together, I might perhaps, have eas'd her boſom

ſom of ſome reflections which, I could perceive, clog it with ſorrow; but, though I am warmly intereſted in her favour, the ſhortneſs of our acquaintance forbids me to ſolicit any degree of confidence.---Was I her aunt!—Oh, Lady Randal! never—never can I forgive your unnatural cold neglect of this drooping bloſſom!

As matters are circumſtanc'd I feel not that regret, in parting with Miſs Dighton, which I ſhould have felt, had I ſeen her receiv'd and treated differently from what I have witneſs'd.

Her Ladyſhip tells me Sophia ſhall often come and ſpend a few days here, and that ſhe ſhall return and make one of the family, as ſoon as her health is eſtabliſh'd—I wiſh ſhe may intend to perform theſe fair promiſes:---I cannot ſay my faith is perfectly implicit---I have intreated leave only to conduct her niece to the other houſe, but

am abſolutely refus'd; nay, ſhe is particularly careful never to leave us together: aſſuredly ſhe has ſuſpicions, but I cannot deviſe of what nature.

Oh Lady Anne! what a ſight have I before me!—A little ſummer-houſe, at the cloſe of a walk, fronts my window;—there—there ſits, at this inſtant Lady Randal, and Sophia kneeling at her feet.—Why does ſhe not ſnatch the ſweet ſuppliant to her arms!—Oh unimpaſſion'd woman!—No, my dear friend, ſhe riſes—ſhe goes from her—ſhe leaves her, without ſo much as caſting one, even one reluctant look of compaſſion.

All I ſee, all I fear, is a myſtery wound on ſo perplexing a clue that I will not try to unravel it.

I am diſpirited on account of this amiable girl:—ſhe certainly is amiable—her very countenance, in ſtriking characters, pronounces that ſhe

ſhe is.—Perhaps ſome lover:—her aunt diſapproves him.—Why diſapprove him?—I am miſtaken in Sophia if ſhe would ſettle her affections unworthily:—no, I think I could anſwer for it ſhe would not.

She is ſtill ſitting in the ſummer-houſe, with an handkerchief at her eyes.—I wiſh it was in my power to ſtop the ſoft torrent that I am convinc'd iſſues from them.

Heavens! what do I ſee!—Lady Randal is not quite ſo cruel as I thought her;—ſhe is come back—ſhe is this moment aſcending the ſteps.—May I believe my eyes?—if I may truſt them, I ſhall now think better of her Ladyſhip than I have ever yet done:—ſhe has actually embrac'd Sophia—tenderly embrac'd her, and they are talking with apparent affection as they ſit together.

Thank God there is yet ſome chance that I may not loſe my a-

miable companion: — I ſee no neceſſity for change of air;—ſhe has not experienc'd this more than five days: —indulging her favourite inclinations—a little tenderneſs from Lady Randal, and a little of my giddy vivacity (as her Ladyſhip is pleas'd to call it) which I would exert to chace away her dejection, would, I make no doubt, ſoon work a favourable alteration, without either change of place or climate; for you know, my dear Lady, if ſhe is engag'd to any gentleman abroad, he may eaſily tranſport himſelf hither, at a ſhort notice.

I am fond of graſping every pleaſing hope; and though poſſibly this I have now taken hold of may only prove a ſhadow, I ſhall gaze on it till it fleets from my ſight, or I am aſſur'd of its reality.

I kiſs your hands, my belov'd friend. — The frequency of my letters will tell you, your idea is never far from me.

LET-

LETTER. VIII.

SOPHIA is gone!—yes; after all ſhe is abſolutely gone!—When I ſaw her aunt's tenderneſs in the ſummer-houſe, I drew from it a concluſion too ſanguine.—She left us yeſterday, and we accompanied her half the journey:—I ſay we, for Lady Randal would not ſuffer me to ſtir without her.

Notwithſtanding this unaccountable ſeparation, there ſeems to be ſome ſeeds of affection newly ſprung up in (I cannot help ſaying) the flinty heart of her Ladyſhip:—I wiſh they may not be choak'd, or blighted, before they come to perfection.—Pray don't think me ſevere!—Upon my word, I would never look at any perſon's imperfections through a magnifier, much leſs at thoſe of a lady, to whoſe huſband I had the honour of being related;

—but you know, I cannot help ſeeing her faults, if ſhe holds them continually before my ſight, in ſo glaring a magnitude that, turn which way I will, my eyes cannot eſcape them.

There are a thouſand errors to which human nature is addicted, and which require mutual indulgence from each other, none of the very beſt being quite perfect; but there is a kind of vice in Lady Randal's conſtitution for which I have no mercy, becauſe it is the very oppoſite to mercy itſelf.—If ever her cheek was wetted with the tear of compaſſion—if ever her boſom heav'd a ſigh of ſoft commiſeration—if ever ſhe felt a moment's pain except what ariſes from bodily diſorders, I would then inroll her on my indulgent liſt.—So far from having a tincture in her compoſition of this heavenly ſenſibility, I am convinc'd, if ſurrounded by a million of objects, the real children of diſtreſs,

diſtreſs, ſhe would make her way through them, without a tear, a ſigh, or even one painful ſenſation. Oh, my charming Miſs Dighton! how will your intereſt come off in this ungentle boſom?—Perhaps, for your ſake, heaven may fill it with new ſentiments: — if not, may it take you under its own protection, and by other means direct you to happineſs.

I feel my ſpirits decline, on being again ſhut up with my prim governante, and debarred the company of Sophia. — I ſhall abſolutely dwindle into the vapours, unleſs I ſtir about and rouze myſelf from this lethargic ſeizure. — Suppoſe I pretend ſome buſineſs with my milliner—

Obtain the chariot for a day,
And ſet the world on fire.

No, Lady Anne! not for a day—for an hour only!—A ſhort drive may chace away my chagrin, and return me in a better humour than I leave you.

LET-

LETTER IX.

FLutter'd with ſurprize!—all over agitated with pleaſure—ſing, ſing ye damſels my triumph!—Prepare a laurel wreath for your champion!—The enemy returns—contrary to my expectation he returns; he ſtill prowls about this neighbourhood.—The next perſon he lights upon for his prey, will, I moſt ſincerely hope, be the honour'd friend of Lady Anne D———. Already have I made ſome advances towards a victory, which is to crown me with immortal fame.

I told you what a new face would do:—think me not vain, I charge you, but, *entre nous*, a much better than I can boaſt could not have performed better than, I humbly believe, mine has done this morning.

Lady Randal having graciouſly

conſented

conſented that I ſhould leave her for an hour, or ſome ſuch ſhort time, to diſpatch pretended buſineſs with my milliner, I ran to the glaſs, adjuſted my cap, threw a white cloak careleſsly round my ſhoulders, tied on a pretty chip hat juſt brought from London, and whipping into the chariot, felt, as I drove towards the town, a certain dancing-like emotion at my heart, which I could not then account for; but now I underſtand it meant to inform me, the enemy I have been ſo long in purſuit of, was at no great diſtance.

A ſervant from behind the carriage opening the door, I ſtep'd out, gave him orders to wait, and tripp'd into the ſhop, pleas'd to ſee a number of my female acquaintance aſſembled there before me.—Univerſal pleaſure ſpread itſelf over every face at my entrance, and many of them getting round me, there was a kind of conteſt which ſhould

firſt

firſt communicate ſome intelligence, with which it was viſible they were burthen'd; but before any of them could give it utterance, the door open'd, and a gentleman made his appearance, who, by the vermilion cheeks and ſparkling eyes of my little circle (which began to diſperſe) I in a moment perceiv'd would have been the ſubject of their converſation.

Seeing him accoſt each lady in her turn, with ſome mark of preference, I began to obſerve him more particularly, and own the fineneſs of his perſon, the elegance of his air, join'd with an eaſy and polite addreſs, made me think him much above any thing I had beheld ſince I came to the farm; but when one of the circle whiſper'd me, this is the man to whom you once gave the name of SMALL-TALKER, my preference vaniſh'd, and I felt my boſom glow with unſpeakable reſentment.

To

To conceal my agitation I turn'd from him, and leaning over the counter, talk'd of ſome trifling purchaſe; but in truth, my whole thoughts were employ'd againſt the enemy of our ſex, whoſe external advantages are weapons which I fear few of them can withſtand:—never have I ſeen a more compleat —a more pleaſing figure;—heighth —ſhape—hair—complexion—teeth —eyes—ſmile—all unite to make the creature more dangerous, in a county like this, than a hungry wolf in a ſhepherd's paſture, or an artful fox amongſt a parcel of ſilly chickens.—I was not half ſo much alarm'd before I ſaw him.—Why, my dear Lady Anne, Sir William Lovedale is doubly—trebly arm'd for miſchief.—What an atchievement to mortify this unſuſceptible rover, who, perhaps, has in his time mortified a little army of females!—Upon my word, I ſhall glory much in the attempt.—I buſied myſelf mightily in chooſing

ſome

ſome lace, and was ſeemingly inattentive to what paſs'd amongſt the rival crew, when I diſcover'd the SMALL-TALKER had a caſting vote which would carry him the election in every heart preſent.—Thus inattentive thus unobſerving, ſtood I, when in a half whiſper he aſk'd one of the ladies ſome queſtion in which I was not unconcern'd, but her reply was ſo low I could not diſtinguiſh it, eſpecially as at that inſtant he was attack'd by a multiplicity of voices, about his journey, his return, and I know not what, to which he anſwer'd with great volubility and an air of eaſy freedom not at all bold or diſguſting.—Before we parted, he gave me a ſpecimen of his peculiar genius for that kind of gallantry which makes him the object of my averſion.—Would you believe it, Lady Anne, as I caſt my eyes ſlily towards him, I ſaw the inſinuating deſigner, with a look of tender ſincerity, when he thought himſelf unobſerv'd, preſs the hand

of

of a very pretty girl, who ſtood next me, firſt to his lips, then to his deceiving boſom; and not a moment after, true as I live, with the ſame tender air I heard him ſay to another, My deareſt Harriot! a week's ſeparation from all I love has been a ſevere trial! I think I could not again ſupport it!—Something of the ſame nature, I dare ſay, he whiſper'd to every one of them; for when I turn'd round, not a cheek but was ſtreak'd with crimſon—not an eye but ſpoke tranſport.—Alas, poor girls! I will ſtrip the impoſtor of his diſguiſe; but if he has already ſunk ſo deep into your affections, I bring up my *corpſe de reſerve* too late, and my aid will be ineffectual.—However, thought I, calling upon a look (for though I do not often frown, I wanted then a ſmile particularly engaging) however we will try what is to be done, and turning to one of the infatuated circle, I aſk'd if ſhe intended being at the next aſ-

ſembly?—

ſembly?—This little queſtion drew on me a glance from the perſon whoſe notice I wiſh'd to attract, and, perhaps, not holding me totally unworthy of a place in his liſt of broken hearts, he ſaid (bowing reſpectfully) Forgive, madam, my preſumption! but may I not flatter myſelf that I had the honour of ſeeing you laſt winter in town, at Lord W———'s?

I have very often been at Lord W———'s, ſir, but do not recollect.

Pardon me, madam, for interrupting you! I have not the vanity to ſuppoſe myſelf remembered—it was my ill fortune to ſee you but for a moment. I was juſt going off for Dover you was ſitting at a card-table—I ſtaid only to take a ſhort leave of Lord and Lady W———I regretted the neceſſity of my departure (ſighing) but eſteem myſelf

ſelf particularly favour'd by Fortune, in meeting you, madam, in this neighbourhood.

Mighty well, mighty well thought I: — he carves finely for himſelf: —My buſineſs is half done already.

After this pretty introduction we had ſome other converſation, and when I went to the chariot he very politely offer'd me his hand, which no doubt I as politely accepted; and here I am juſt return'd, more delighted, perhaps, than if I had really made an undoubted conqueſt, which is no unflattering acquiſition to a woman ſo moderately fitted out by Nature for that kind of work.

Poſitively I muſt and will go to the aſſembly next Monday:—ſhould Lady Randal refuſe me, I ſhall find a ſcheme at her ſervice.—Sir William Lovedale, you may expect to meet me—you may depend on my punctuality.

Alas,

Alas, lovely engaging Sophia! thoſe moments which I am volatilely gliding over, you, I fear, are tediouſly dragging through;---perhaps, even whilſt I am diverting myſelf with the thoughts of chaſtizing a Small-talker, you are ſhedding tears for a conſtant deſerving lover, from whom you are reluctantly divided.

Heavens! what have we here?

Sir William Lovedale preſents reſpectful compliments to, &c. &c. If ſhe intends to favour the aſſembly with her agreeable preſence next Monday, he would eſteem it a particular happineſs to be honour'd with her fair hand.

Poſitively too much! I muſt lay down my pen to congratulate myſelf on this unlook'd-for piece of good fortune.

LET-

LETTER X.

AFter conſulting Lady Randal, and wheedling her Ladyſhip into compliance, the following was my anſwer to the dear delightful card, with which I concluded my laſt.

Miſs ——— compliments to Sir William Lovedale, is obliged to him for his polite offer, and ſhe'll accept it with pleaſure.

Give yourſelf no uneaſineſs my excellent friend—I am only kind to be cruel—methought I heard you ſay take care—take care, you are dancing on the edge of a precipice—the man ſo inſinuating---you not unſuſceptible.

What can I ſay, my dear Lady Anne, to convince you there is no danger?—think better of me, I beſeech you—an angel's form, with ſuch

ſuch a mind delighting to give pain, would make no impreſſion on me—I proteſt it would not—the moment I entertain a ſerious thought of Sir William, ſuppoſing he ſhould try to inſpire me, as he does almoſt every woman, with ſentiments in his favour, that moment throw me from your friendſhip, for in that caſe, I ſhould hate myſelf—I ſhould not deſire the deareſt friend I have on earth to love me.

Have I ſatisfied your doubts?—you ſay I have—very well—now you know my ſtrength——never doubt me for the future.

A letter is juſt brought from Miſs Dighton; Lady Randal read it in her cloſet—I enquired after the health of her niece, as ſoon as ſhe came out, and was told it was rather worſe than better.

I no longer perceive a ſymptom of that new-born tenderneſs, which

I once

I once thought was ſpringing up in the breaſt of Lady Randal, ſhe mentions the indiſpoſition of her charming niece without the leaſt emotion of concern.—Has misfortune a laſh in her poſſeſſion whoſe ſevere touch would reach ſuch inſenſibility of ſoul, and awaken its benumb'd faculties?—will my queſtion admit of any but a negative anſwer?—I think not; otherwiſe, Lady Randal, I can foreſee one in ſtore for you, that will wind itſelf cloſely round your heart, and fill it with ſenſations to which you are yet a ſtranger.—So lovely — ſo young—ſo innocent a creature—ſend her away—leave her a prey to ſickneſs—to a melancholy, ſtill more pernicious—if ſhe ſhould die, my Lady, what will be your reflections?

When, with my eyes ſwimming in tears, on hearing Sophia was worſe, I beſought her Ladyſhip to ſend for her here, or elſe permit me to go and be her companion; what think

think you was the anſwer I receiv'd? the girl has proper attendants, and proper advice, where ſhe is—I ſhall not incommode myſelf with ſick people— when ſhe is better, poſſibly, I may take her home—'till then you muſt content yourſelf, child, with my company.

Good God! not incommode herſelf with a ſick relation! paſſion in a moment dry'd up my tears — my eyes, I am ſure, ſparkled with indignation — I turn'd from her — I left the room — I could not ſupport her inhumanity.

Let me try to drive this unnatural woman from my thoughts, or my letters inſtead of anſwering the deſign I intended, which was to entertain and divert you, will dwindle into ſober, gloomy, ſentimental reflections, which, perhaps, have not ſo much as the merit of being new to recommend them.

Fortune

Fortune favours you, my dear Lady Anne, it has opportunely ſent ſeveral of our neighbouring damſels to relieve your Ladyſhip from my ſtupidity—I go down in hopes to hear ſomething of my future victim.---Alas! how very aukward is affectation---fain would I regain my uſual ſtile, but dulneſs has taken ſuch faſt hold of me, that it is a matter of doubt whether I ſhall ever be able to diſentangle myſelf from his embraces.

LET-

LETTER XI.

SIR William Lovedale, or rather the ſound of that dear inchanting name, has, with pleaſing magic, unbound my captivated ſpirits — mount — mount — mount —— they carry me to ſuch a height, that my head is abſolutely half giddy. --- Let me conſider a moment --- am I really an angel? --- why to be ſure there is ſomething mighty etherial in my form --- beſides can any perſon doubt Sir William's ſkill in celeſtials --- he, who has a thouſand goddeſſes created by his own power? --- no, no, I am certainly divine, and the firſt place in his Paradiſe of —— Oh fie, Lady Anne! did I ſay fools, is at my ſervice? --- well, well, you are a dear ſatirical creature, but I can forgive every thing if you will not attempt to unangel me.

" So, madam, how do you like Sir William Lovedale now? --- now is he

he the monſter you apprehended him?---now is it neceſſary to drive him from our neighbourhood?—he's dying for you—yes indeed is he—we are nothing with him now—he calls you angel—he ſwears you are the moſt agreeable, amiable, in ſhort, I know not what—he talks of nothing elſe; and, my dear creature! we are come in a body to tell you how jealous you have made us."

Sit down, ſit down, Ladies (finding myſelf ſurrounded with no leſs than five, all of them ſaluting me in the manner above) ſit down, I ſay, and, if you are come to demand ſatisfaction, I will endeavour to give it in the manner moſt agreeable to your wiſhes.

Well! firſt give us back the heart of our ſwain, ſaid they, laughing.

Take it then, for by the account you once gave me, it is too hollow for ſervice, unleſs converted into a

ſmelling-bottle, and ſtood out to decorate one's toilet; but, now I recollect it will not do for that neither, its ſides are pierced too full of holes to make it capable of retaining ſans pareille; it may ſerve indeed, without any alteration, for a pocket etwee, to hold one's bodkin, compaſs, reeds, and other little matters—but are you ſure, ladies, that Sir William has preſented me with this pretty toy?

Yes, that we are, or you came by it unfairly.——

No, upon my word, if ever I ſteal, it ſhall be a thing of greater value than a trifling heart offered to every female who is pleaſed to think it worth her notice.—I look'd round as I ſaid this, and behold every face ſaid, in words of crimſon, "It has been offer'd to me." I ſhould have added a word or two more on this occaſion, when Lady Randal, with a gloomy countenance, and head erect, majeſti-

majeſtically glided into the room, and put an entire ſtop to our ſubject.

Thank God, I ſhall not be much longer immur'd with this piece of antiquated auſterity; our family goes to town in three weeks—I am never left out of thoſe delightful excurſions, and, by what I can gather, Miſs Dighton will ſupply my abſence at the farm:—Why is it I can never think of her without a kind of terror?—Ah! it ariſes from compaſſion, which her uncertain fate excites.

My beloved friend, when will you come to England?—I dreamt of you laſt night.—I dreamt I was tranſported to——, and ſaw you ſitting before that very window, where your Ladyſhip has often told me you ſpend whole hours, liſtening to that amazing torrent of waters, whoſe aſtoniſhing voice ſalutes you from the diſtant rocks;—methought you look'd pleas'd, ſerene and happy.—I hope this will be the very ſituation in which I ſhall

ſurprize you, not in perſon, but by means of an art which I more than ever eſteem ſince I have been cut off from your valuable converſation. — Adieu! I will not tire you with profeſſions.

LET-

LETTER XII.

THE honour of my fair hand—yes, he has had that honour—my fair hand! heavens! how often did he preſs it to his lips?—how often ſigh over it?—he hears me talk of leaving this neighbourhood—he rejoices that I am going to town—his buſineſs in the country is almoſt finiſh'd—he ſhall have the ſupreme happineſs of meeting me there—he hopes his viſits will not be diſpleaſing to me—diſagreeable to my family.

Indeed, Lady Anne, 'till this interview with Sir William, I was inſenſible to the pride of my heart—yet it is a diſcreet pride—a pride of which I am not aſham'd—I was mortify'd I own—I confeſs I was mortify'd to be treated on the ſame footing with thoſe credulous girls, whoſe inexperience, or ſhallow underſtanding made him ſelect out, as proper objects for his unmeaning gallantry.

Don't think, becauſe I moralize a little on this occaſion, I hold Sir William utterly unworthy my attention—no, had you ſeen how I look'd —how I ſmil'd—how mightily I was pleas'd with my partner —— your Ladyſhip would have thought me either an adept in the art of diſſimulation, or elſe in reality very much attach'd to his figure — I am call'd away—Lady Randal ſends for me— I think I need not explain my meaning in regard to Sir William Lovedale.

LET-

LETTER XIII.

THE man himſelf, Lady Anne, as I live! — I found him with Lady Randal. — He has deſired her Ladyſhip's permiſſion to viſit me: — Was ever audacity like this? — She's charmed with him: — I never remember to have ſeen her in ſuch high good humour. — My project goes on ſwimmingly: — I ſhall ſoon call him to a round reckoning. — Lord help us! how cautiouſly need we ſimple women liſten to ſuch men as Sir William! — He wears a cloſe-woven maſk. — Before experience taught me better, I ſhould have judg'd only from appearances: — appearances would have ſpoke him generous, humane, ſincere, tender: — appearances would have told me, that he was over head and ears in love with my ſweet perſon. — I give appearances to the wind, and will liſten only to the dictates of revenge, perfectly juſt, and not unentertaining.

Provoking! — Again I am interrupted. — I leave you, my friend. — Lady Randal is taken ſuddenly ill: —ſhe has ſent for me:—I muſt go to her inſtantly.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

I Am terrified to death:—I really believe Lady Randal will not live three hours:—I have ſent for her niece:—her Ladyſhip knows not that I have:—ſhe has not been out of a ſtrong delirium ſince yeſterday that ſhe was firſt ſeiz'd:—three of the moſt eminent phyſicians attend her conſtantly.—What can I do more?—Perhaps I have done too much:—perhaps, if ſhe recovers her ſenſes, ſhe will be diſpleas'd at my ſending for Sophia.—But, alas, poor woman! I fear ſhe will never more chide me on this or any other occaſion.—I really am infinitely diſtreſs'd:—I long for the arrival of her niece:—I am frighten'd to be all alone in the midſt of ſcenes ſo horrible.

Good God! Lady Anne, what will become of me?—Her groans, even at the diſtance of two apartments, pierce my ears;—they are really terrible.—

rible.—How I wiſh to ſee Miſs Dighton:—I ſtart at my own ſhadow,—I hear Lady Randal calling upon her continually.

Sir William Lovedale is juſt come in:—I ſuppoſe he knows nothing of our ſituation.—I refuſe going down to him:—this is no time to trifle.—I never thought I could feel what I now feel for Lady Randal.—There is ſomething in diſtreſs which melts a ſuſceptible breaſt to pity, be the object ever ſo unamiable.—I can write no more.—I expect Sophia every moment:—I am going to plant myſelf at a window, from whence I can ſee her before ſhe comes to the houſe—Adieu!

LET-

LETTER XV.

EVERY thing here wears a different face from what, at the concluſion of my laſt, I had reaſon to expect. — Lady Randal has recover'd her ſenſes: — ſhe is much better: — we have now hopes her diſorder will not be fatal. — Miſs Dighton is in the houſe, but I have not yet broke it to her Ladyſhip, nor ſhall I at any time enter on this taſk but with fear and trembling; yet, is there any thing ſo difficult which I would not undertake to ſerve the lovely heart-breaking Sophia? — Well may I ſay her heart is breaking: — I cannot tell you her diſtraction, when inform'd of Lady Randal's danger: — I cannot paint to you that tender anxious concern, which, at preſent, appears for her recovery. — It is with the utmoſt difficulty I keep the dear girl from flying to her aunt's apartment; — ſhe is ever at the door, and often on her knees before it, imploring

ring heaven with ſtreaming eyes, uplifted hands, and fervent ejaculations.

Now, my amiable friend, whoſe gentle boſom is always ready to ſympathize in afflictions not your own, having told you the preſent ſituation of our affairs, I go in purſuit of Sophia, to try if, for one moment, I can either ſoothe or divert her melancholy.

LET-

LETTER XVI.

I Thought I ſhould never more have taken up a pen; — witneſs heavens, I thought it! — I thought ſurprize — horror — and indignation would have cut the thread of my exiſtence — Oh, Lady Anne! my boſom will burſt if I do not lighten it of a moſt dreadful ſecret — the moſt unnatural — the moſt cruel tranſaction: — yet I cannot — muſt not tell you; — muſt not — cannot: oh, no! I promis'd — I ſaid I would not; yet to you — to my deareſt friend, in whoſe ſecrecy I dare confide, ſhall I have any reſerve with you? — How I ſtill tremble! — how I ſtill ſhudder! — I find I muſt give it up — I find I muſt: — take it then — take it whilſt I have yet ſpirits to recount the aſtoniſhing tale.

Let me conſider a moment! — What am I doing? — Whoſe ſecret am I going to divulge? — Is it my own? —

own?—No: if it was my own I would not hesitate.—Something forbids my proceeding—some irresistable power stops my pen;—it whispers me that I shall not even to you—to you, my friend, expose the character never yet contaminated, even by suspicion.—Forgive this seeming fickleness!—A time may come, when my present reason for silence will be remov'd—the moment it is, you shall not accuse me of reserve.

Obliged to drop this subject, my head, my heart, my hand, will not permit me to engage in any other. How is my whole frame agitated!—When shall I recover my astonishment?—Alas, Sophia! what will become of you?

I know I am all this while exciting your curiosity;—but have patience, madam, and I believe I may assure your Ladyship it will not remain a month longer ungratified.—

Lady

Lady Randal is worſe. — What a ſcene could I relate! — I wiſh not for her life; — to wiſh it would be cruelty. — I ſaid I would write no more — ſtill I am running on. — Adieu!

LET-

LETTER XVII.

ONCE more my dear friend after a ſilence of ten days, I take up my pen.—The fate of Lady Randal is determin'd :— her cold remains were yeſterday depoſited in their laſt habitation:—the poor Sophia is inconſolable.

I am far from forgetting my promiſe to your Ladyſhip, yet, at this time, I really cannot perform it;—humanity—tender compaſſion will ſcarce ſuffer me even for a moment to leave Miſs Dighton—I ſhould never pardon myſelf if I neglected any thing in my power, to alleviate her affliction :—but, alas! the deep root it has taken in her breaſt, together with her weak habit of body, ſeem to threaten a fatal conſequence, on which I cannot reflect without a very pungent concern.—Fain would I conduct her to my father's houſe, but cannot

cannot prevail on her to leave this place—perhaps in a few weeks I ſhall be more ſucceſsful—'till then I am reſolv'd to be her companion at the farm.—My family muſt excuſe my attending them to town:—I wrote to them already, to deſire they will go without me—they have conſented, and next Wedneſday are to begin their journey.

Ah! my dear Lady Anne! can all the hurrying tranſports of diſſipation to a mind not wholly abſorb'd in pleaſures give half that real delight, half that innate calm ſatisfaction ariſing from the tender offices of friendſhip?

Why are the beſt of parents? why are my kind ſiſters ſo anxious on my account?—their fears are groundleſs—my health was never better—my ſpirits are only drowſy with ſorrow—at the ſound of any pleaſing event they will wake more vigorous for having

having ſunk under a momentary depreſſion.

I have left the object of my care too long—I know your Ladyſhip would be the firſt to blame me, if I ſhould unkindly neglect the ſweet mourner.—Forgive me then if I leave you to attend her:—you know not—you can have no idea how much ſhe ſtands in need of conſolation—ſuch a train of troubles, of diſappointments have purſued her from her firſt entrance on the ſtage of life, as to hear them recounted would melt an heart of adamant. What then, Lady Anne, will yours feel? how will it ſink within you when I ſend a detail of them, which I am very ſoon going to prepare for your inſpection.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

ANOTHER week of ſilence! — Miſs Dighton has been much worſe — ſo very ill that I have not left her bedſide for a moment:— thank God ſhe is now better, or I ſhould have ſuffer'd greatly from my apprehenſion: — ſhe has ſat up part of the day, eat a little chicken broth, and is, I think, ſurprizingly reviv'd. — Doctor G——, who attended Lady Randal, ſtill viſits my charming patient, and I hope every thing from his ſkill. — Though I can be of no ſervice to the diſorder of her body, yet I call her my patient, for ſhe has a ſevere malady preying on the mind, to remove which my aſſiſtance ſhall not be wanting.

During Lady Randal's illneſs, and ſince her death, a day has not paſt without bringing a card of inquiries from Sir William. — He expreſſes his

his uneaſineſs for my health — his hopes of ſeeing me — his fears leſt confinement ſhould hurt my ſpirits — his wiſhes for the recovery of my friend.

Don't you think, my Lady, I am mightily indebted to this Adonis for ſo flattering a preference? — Nay, I aſſure you he takes no pains to conceal it; — the whole neighbourhood are laying their wiſe heads together, it ſeems, to diſcover if he is really in love with me: — really! — for indeed, my dear, I believe moſt of them, poor ſouls, have had reaſon to doubt the reality of his other attachments. — Recover my lovely Sophia! — Let me ſee you once able to leave your chamber, and Sir William's reward is at no great diſtance.

Oh, Lady Anne! I hate the deteſtable character of a Small-talker — I hate it now with unconquerable averſion. — It was ever my intentions to make one of them do penance

nance for that deſtructive herd of animals; but ſince my acquaintance with Miſs Dighton, one will hardly ſatisfy my vengeance --- I would ſacrifice a thouſand to my reſentment. — Alas, ſweet girl! I fear ſhe has been cheated out of her peace — her health — her happineſs — perhaps her life, by one of theſe wretches — I will tell your Ladyſhip on what grounds I form my ſuſpicion, but ſhall firſt begin another letter. — My reaſons for them are ſo interwove with the diſcovery of a certain black tranſaction, that I cannot give you one without revealing the other.

If Sophia's lover is conſtant, of which there may be a poſſibility, for his ſake (whom appearances are at preſent ſo much againſt) I will abate ſomething of my vengeance: — I think I will even let Sir William eſcape with half his intended puniſhment.

Farewell,

Farewell, my dear amiable Lady Anne! — To-morrow, if Miſs Dighton is well enough to be left a few hours with her faithful Hannah, I will enter on my recital. — I wiſh it was of ſuch a nature as would entertain, without diſtreſſing you.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

BEFORE I begin my relation, I may have occasion to remind you, madam, that some days preceding the death of Lady Randal, I sent for Sophia, and being afraid to discover what I had done, conceal'd the knowledge of it from her Ladyship; — I spoke to you of Miss Dighton's affliction — I told you her impatience, and the difficulty I had to keep her from her aunt's apartment — I told you too, just as I laid down my pen, that I would go in search of, and endeavour to console her.

Lady Randal having past a tolerable night, I found Sophia less agitated, or at least under the influence of less agonizing conflicts than she had been subject to since her arrival.

Rejoic'd at ſo flattering a change, I compell'd the reluctant girl to let me lead her from the chamber to the garden, in hopes air, exerciſe, and converſation on ſome ſubject more unintereſting than her aunt's illneſs, would preſerve her calm ſerenity of mind which with pleaſure I ſaw, or fancied I ſaw, beaming from her fair eyes: — ſhe lean'd on my arm — ſhe ſuffer'd me, as we walk'd, to try at amuſing her — ſhe even look'd as if ſhe wiſh'd to be amus'd; — but a ſigh half ſuppreſs'd — a ſtarting tear ſpoke the inefficacy of my endeavours. — I was not diſcouraged — I continued prattling — I gather'd flowers — I preſented them to her — I pointed out their ſeveral beauties, and beg'd her to obſerve how ſweetly the hand of Nature had diſpos'd their variegated colours.

She look'd at them; — ſhe ſaid with an air of dejection, Nature is a tender, a kind mother — ſhe has no neglected offspring — every thing

to

to which ſhe gives birth is the object of her attention.

I was pleas'd to hear her make this ſenſible remark — I thought it no bad ſign that her mind was enough compoſed to admit reflection.

Having walked a few turns, ſhe expreſs'd a ſtrong impatience to go in and enquire for her aunt; but fearing I ſhould not be able to drag her again from the houſe, I prevailed on her to ſit down on a ſeat in the garden, and went myſelf, in order to give her the ſatisfaction ſhe wanted.

Notwithſtanding the little time we had been abſent, I found the face of affairs greatly changed within doors; Lady Randal's diſorder being return'd with ſuch violence that the phyſicians all pronounced they had no expectations of her living over that day.

Without going to her Ladyſhip's chamber, I haſted back to the garden reſolved to hide the moſt alarm-

ing part of my intelligence, and only ſay, ſhe was not better.

I ſuppoſe my countenance betray'd more than I intended, for Sophia, weak as ſhe was, running, or rather flying, to meet me, no ſooner look'd in my face, than, with a voice and air (the recollection of which even now terrifies me) ſhe franticly ſcreech'd out — She's gone! — ſhe's dead! — Oh, my cruel mother! you die — you die without bleſſing me!

How ſhall I deſcribe my horror — my aſtoniſhment? — I caught her, diſtracted as ſhe was, in my arms, and exerted all my ſtrength to ſupport her, as ſhe ſeem'd panting for breath: I know not what I ſaid — I only know that, by ſome means or other, I made her underſtand Lady Randal was not dead, which led to ſuch a ſcene as my memory never — never can loſe ſight of. — Again I ſee her at my feet — I feel her eagerly embrace my knees — I feel my boſom

ſom wet with her ſtreaming tears, as kneeling by the dear diſtracted creature I caught her ſinking head upon my ſhoulder. — Theſe were the effects of her firſt tranſports, when ſhe recollected on a diſcovery hurried from her by the violence of ſurprize and ſorrow.

All my conſolatory efforts prov'd abortive, as ſhe was inſenſible to my ſoothings: — even when ſhe franticly beſought my ſilence, in the diſtreſſing manner I have deſcribed, ſhe was inattentive to the aſſurances I gave, not to let her ſecret paſs my lips; — nor ſhould it ever, even to you, Lady Anne, had not death remov'd the only perſon whom it would have affected with ſhame: — that one cannot now ſuffer from a diſcovery, nor is there any left behind her whom it can poſſibly injure; — on the contrary, it muſt reflect honour on Sophia, and give your Ladyſhip a very pleaſing opinion of that faithful, worthy domeſtic,

whoſe fidelity is not more the object of wonder than admiration.

I will not purſue, with expreſſions of reſentment, cold unſuſceptible aſhes, yet I ſtart with horror when I conſider the kind of fear by which Miſs Dighton was agitated, when the ſecret of her birth unpremeditatedly eſcaped her. — Would you believe it, madam, the ſhock proceeded from apprehenſion, from dread of her mother's unextinguiſhable fury, ſhould ſhe ever ſuſpect her having inform'd any living being of their connection.

After repeating a thouſand aſſurances not to drop the moſt diſtant hint, by which this unnatural parent ſhould ſuppoſe her ſecret divulged, Sophia held out her trembling hand, and ſaid, with a deep ſigh, whilſt I preſt it between both mine, I am yet ſafe! — You will not betray me? — Lead me, madam — lead the unhappy daughter of Lady Randal to her expiring parent! — You aſſure me ſhe is not dead: —

dead: — let me go to her — let me kneel to implore her bleſſing! — let me go before it is too late!

I hardly knew what reply to make; — I felt the blood forſake my face, yet unwilling to augment her deſpair, I did not ſay how very ill her Ladyſhip was, — I only ſaid that I would return with her whenever ſhe pleaſed — that I would go to her mother's apartment, and having a little prepar'd her for the interview, bring them immediately together.

She ſeem'd ſatisfied with this promiſe, and ſuffer'd me to aſſiſt her back to her chamber.

Whilſt I ſat with her, pretending Lady Randal was fallen aſleep, ſhe addreſs'd me in this manner: — The late ſtrange behaviour, my compaſſionate friend, to which you have been a witneſs, muſt excite your curioſity; — I would ſatisfy it, but my ſtrength is too much gone — my ſpirits too much flutter'd; — conde-

ſcend to receive it from my faithful Hannah — ſhe is acquainted with every tranſaction of my life — ſhe ſhall conceal nothing from you.

Here, my dear Lady Anne, I am obliged to drop my narrative, — I go down to receive the viſit of a ſtranger, who deſires, it ſeems, to ſee me on important buſineſs.

LET-

LETTER XX.

UPON my word a very extraordinary viſitor. — You cannot, my dear friend, gueſs the catechiſm I have paſs'd through ſince I left you: — I believe I anſwer'd aukwardly enough — of this I am certain, that never on any ſudden attack did I find myſelf more unprepared — more perplex'd — more confounded — I can hardly yet rally my ſpirits.

Heaven guard us all from Cupid's bow! a good old ſong, Lady Anne, I every day ſee cauſe for joining heartily in the ſame petition. — Theſe men — theſe men — how could I rail againſt their perfidy! not that ever I ſuffer'd from their inconſtancy, in my own perſon, but my heart is at this moment bleeding for two, that have not, I fear, eſcap'd on ſuch eaſy terms.

One of them you are not acquainted with—the other I will make haſte and introduce to you.—There is no abſolute certainty that Sophia's lover is inconſtant; but, poor Lucy! what can be ſaid for your ingrate?—he has remov'd even a poſſibility of deſerving you.

It ſeems as if Diana was reſolved to keep me in her train, by ſending ſuch repeated inſtances of man's fickleneſs to frighten me from any connection with that cruel ſex:—yes, a ſingle life ſhall be my fate, unleſs—I ſay no more—a hint is ſufficient—you may perceive by one ſingle word drop'd from my unguarded pen, that I am not abſolutely determin'd againſt a ſtate in which your Ladyſhip has often told me you enjoy the moſt perfect felicity.

As I entered the parlour, to which my viſitor had been conducted, a woman of about forty, genteel in perſon and appearance, advanc'd to meet me,

me, having firſt return'd the ſalutation of a courteſy.—I ſaw her under a good deal of concern, and leading her to a chair, deſir'd ſhe would inform me to what I was indebted for the honour of her company.

My buſineſs to you, madam is of an extraordinary nature, reply'd ſhe, and before I can venture to declare it, I muſt not only intreat your pardon, but alſo that you will condeſcend to anſwer a few queſtions eſſential to my peace;—ſo very eſſential, that I cannot excuſe myſelf from aſking them, though, perhaps by ſo great a liberty, I may incur the imputation of an impertinent intruder.

She ſeem'd greatly agitated, and before I could deliver my anſwer, which would have been far from diſcouraging, ſhe went on.

I am an entire ſtranger to your perſon, madam, yet with your character I am well acquainted:—I ho-

nour

nour, that candour for which you are univerſally approved, and by a knowledge of it, am encouraged to proceed.

I bow'd, and ſhe continued, looking earneſtly at me, as ſhe ſpoke.

Do you, madam, admit the viſits of Sir William Lovedale?—Has he made any pretenſions to your heart?—Does he entertain you with his paſſion—Are you attached to him?

Such a ſtring of queries, delivered rather abruptly, made me feel as if I had been thunder ſtruck.—I told you, my Lady, I was never more unprepared, perplexed, and confounded—indeed, I never in my whole life felt more aukwardly;—had I been really in love with the man, my ſimple bluſhes could not have ſpoke it plainer.

Madam, ſaid the Lady, riſing, you have an ingenuous countenance it has

anſwered

anſwered all my queſtions—I ſhall not give you the pain of a further declaration; he will indeed be an incorrigible wretch, if he does not try to deſerve your preference.—Adieu! madam, let me intreat you will forgive the freedom of my viſit?

By this time I was recover'd from my conſternation, which had before prevented my interrupting her;—I ſtep'd towards her—I got hold of her hand—I ſaid, we muſt not, madam, part in this manner; a lady of your apparent good underſtanding, muſt have juſtifiable motives for a procedure ſo extraordinary:—be kind enough to indulge me with them, and ſuffer me to aſſure you, the gentleman you mention, has never ſeriouſly addreſs'd me, and, if he had, I find no preference in my heart towards him.

Charming young lady, ſhe was pleas'd to call me, and ſighing, ſaid, ſhe wiſh'd every one, to whom he had

had offer'd his vows, could have receiv'd them with the ſame indifference.—Alas continued ſhe, ſeating herſelf again, at my entreaties, it is too much the mode for young men to flatter women under the diſguiſe of a ſincere paſſion, tho', in reality, they intend nothing ſerious by ſuch profeſſions, and often laugh at thoſe who are ſilly enough to believe the contrary.

Every thing you ſay, madam, reply'd I, tends to convince me, your reaſon for honouring me at this time, with your preſence, is not a common reaſon.

I confeſs it, return'd ſhe.—I ought to have no reſerve to a lady, whoſe candour has laid me under particular obligations; and, if you command it, my motives ſhall be immediately explained.

I have no right to command, madam, ſaid I, however, I own nature has

has not form'd me without mixing a certain ingredient in my compoſition, for which our ſex has been long ſtigmatiz'd.

Well, reply'd ſhe ſmiling, I am not ſo little acquainted with curioſity myſelf, as not to know what it often ſuffers from ſuſpence, and ſhall no longer withhold from you the occaſion of my viſit.

There was ſomething ſo charming in this woman, a mixture of ſo much wiſdom — good humour — and gracefulneſs, that I felt particular impatience, to be inform'd of what ſeem'd to give her uneaſineſs.

Having paid my acknowledgements for the intended favour of her confidence, and prevailed on her to drink a cup of chocolate, ſhe addreſs'd me in the following words :—

My huſband, madam, whoſe name is Bond, has a ward that we both fondly

fondly love—a deſerving, good girl, who tenderly returns our affection—whom we have brought up from an infant, and conſidered as our own child.

In the neighbourhood where we live, liv'd alſo Sir James Lovedale, father to Sir William, on whoſe account I came hither.

Between the young gentleman and our dear Lucy, there ſeem'd for many years a very tender attachment, and often has he proteſted, nothing prevented him from declaring his paſſion, in the moſt open manner, but the fear of enraging his father, to whoſe ſordid diſpoſition none of us were ſtrangers.

Believing the ſon generous in his inclinations, as he was amiable in his perſon, my huſband ſuffer'd his viſits, and not a day paſſed without ſpending great part of it with us; for though our Lucy had but one thou-

ſand

ſand pounds which ſhe could call her own, yet we entertain'd ſuch a flattering opinion of the dear girl, that we thought it impoſſible for a man, who had once loved her, ever to carry his affections to another woman.

At length the great obſtacle to our wiſhes was removed, Sir James died, and left Mr. Lovedale (now Sir William) at liberty to purſue his inclinations.—His firſt viſit gave us no ſuſpicion—our beloved charge ſeemed to have loſt no aſcendency over him, and at every ſubſequent interview we expected he would declare his impatience to become her huſband;—but when, about a month after the death of Sir James, he talked of going abroad to wear off his melancholy, I ſhudder'd for the peace of my child, and, Mr. Bond ventur'd to aſk him, with no very cordial air, what were his intentions in regard to his ward, who had juſt before left the room; he anſwered, they were perfectly honourable; that there was

not

not a woman in the world he would prefer before her; but, for both their ſakes, thought it neceſſary, he ſhould know more of life, before he commenced Benedict, that was his light expreſſion, which made my huſband ſtill more angry, and he told him, in a reſolute tone, no man on earth ſhould trifle with his deſerving Lucy.

Nothing is further from my intention, my dear ſir, replied he; by heaven, I would with this hand ſtab my perfidious heart, was it capable of harbouring even but a ſlighting thought of my Lucy! ſatisfy yourſelf, Mr. Bond, that as ſoon as I come to England, which ſhall be in a few months, I will marry your moſt amiable girl, and ſtudy to make her happy.

We could ſay nothing to this; yet I confeſs, from that moment, I began to entertain ſuſpicions, not in favour of his conſtancy; however, madam,

madam, I ſhall not take up your attention, by repeating them.

Here I could not avoid interrupting her; I am happy, ſaid I, that my ſentiments ſeem to correſpond with thoſe of a lady, ſo very experienced, and by far ſo much a better judge of mankind, than I can pretend to be. I ſee, Mrs. Bond, your ſentiments, as clearly as if you expreſſed them; you have no opinion of that man's honourable deſigns, who miſſes the firſt opportunity of realizing them: —for my part, I hold a dangler in ſo odious a light, that I would fly to the utmoſt parts of the earth, to avoid him.

Indeed you are not miſtaken in my ſentiments, returned ſhe.—

Again I interrupted her, pray, my dear Mrs. Bond, proceed, or I ſhall not forgive myſelf for breaking the thread of your agreeable narrative.

I will

I will obey you, madam—I will tell you Sir William left England, that he correſponded with our Lucy very affectionately, during his abſence, and that he came down to us, as ſoon as he returned, fraught with every ſymptom of his former paſſion.

Lucy did not happen to be then with us, ſhe was gone to my huſband's mother, who lives in this neighbourhod, and of whom ſhe is paſſionately fond:—he followed her hither, much to our ſatisfaction, being as well pleaſed as though ſhe had receiv'd his viſits under our own inſpection.

So you now ſee, Lady Anne, what the magnet was, which drew the SMALL-TALKER to our peaceful quarter.

I heard conſtantly from my Lucy, continued Mrs. Bond—in her letters ſhe always mentioned Sir William, but

but not a word of marriage; — the alteration of her ſtile alarmed me—I thought I diſcovered in it a fixed melancholy, and a hint I received from my mother, made me reſolve to ſee her directly.—Mr. Bond, did not oppoſe my wiſhes; yeſterday I arrived, and after a long converſation, I prevailed on the dear girl to confeſs ſhe was not happy.—She told me ſhe ſaw Sir William but ſeldom, and that ſhe feared he had other attachments in this place.—You, madam, was mentioned as the particular object of his addreſſes;—whilſt my dear amiable Lucy wept the loſs of her lover's affection—ſhe did juſtice to your character, which fame had reported to her, and from your own lips, I reſolv'd to know if ſhe had any foundations for her fears on your account: —I came—I was abrupt in my enquiries—I fancied I ſaw his guilt, and, pardon me, if I ſay your partiality, in the bluſhes which overſpread your face—I thought myſelf convinced—I

was

was going to leave you—I was going to ſet out immediately with my child to carry her from a place where the ſight of her perfidious lover would only ſerve to keep alive a paſſion which, for her peace ſake, it was neceſſary ſhould be extinguiſhed.—You have generouſly undeceived me, madam—you aſſure me he has made no ſerious offer of his heart to you—he may be innocent—I will now return to my Lucy—I will ſee Sir William—I will talk with him—I will know what are his intentions—he ſhall no longer dally with her affections—unleſs he very ſoon propoſes to marry her, I will take her where he ſhall never ſee her more.—I will try to make the dear child forget her unavailing preference, and perſuade her to abandon him for ever.

I ſaid nothing, you may be ſure, againſt Mrs. Bond's intentions; on the contrary, I told her how very much I approved them.—Upon my word, my Lady, I ſee no poſſibility of Lucy's being ever ſettled, at leaſt happily

happily ſettled, with a man of ſuch inconſtant, unſteady, wavering principles.

I parted with great reluctance from Mrs. Bond.—She is a charming woman, and has promiſ'd to ſee me again before ſhe leaves this country —when I hinted a wiſh that ſhe would bring her ward with her, ſhe very readily promiſed to oblige me.

Now anſwer me, my dear Lady Anne, what are your ſentiments of Sir William?—if he marries his Lucy, I will relinquiſh my debt; if not, woe be to him.

You read a great deal:—I dare ſay your Ladyſhip has read Paſtor Fido.—Do you remember the following paſſage?—conſider it over—tell me if you think ſuch advice is *mal apropos* to thoſe of our ſex, who, by youth, beauty, or fortune, are ſubject to the addreſſes of rovers like Sir William Lovedale.

" *Coriſca*

" *Coriſca thou muſt uſe, another day,*
" *Thy lovers like thy garments—put*
" *on one* ——
" *Have many — often ſhift — and wear*
" *out none.*"

Adieu! my charming friend, I am going to ſit an hour with Sophia.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

I Went to Miſs Dighton's chamber with an intent to divert her melancholy, by relating the adventure I gave you in my laſt — by giving a ſketch of Sir William's perſon and character, and by telling her the favour I deſign'd him; but finding her ſpirits in a ſinking mood, at the ſame time conſidering there was a lively ſimilarity in her ſituation, and that of poor Lucy's, I laid my intention aſide, and having ſet by her 'till ſhe fell into a little doſe, which I hope will be refreſhing, I am come back to an employ that never fails to delight me — Yes, my deareſt Lady Anne, upon my ſincerity, I aſſure you, I have few enjoyments more pleaſing than that of writing to your Ladyſhip.

Sir William Lovedale has been here ſince Mrs. Bond left me — I pretended indiſpoſition — I abſolutely refuſed to ſee him — methinks I would not

carry my ſcheme on any further 'till I know if he intends to deal honourably by the ward of Mrs. Bond — if not, I again repeat, woe be to him.

When I firſt began a correſpondence with your Ladyſhip, how little did I dream of the many incidents that would croud to my pen, and claim the diſtinguiſhing honour of your attention: — my ſcribblings were only to inform you that I was well — that I lov'd you — that I thought of you continually; — inſtead of which, I have ran into characters, narrations, hiſtory, and the Lord knows what: — one, and that very intereſting, ſtill remains untold — take it then, my dear Lady Anne and, by way of variety, take it thus.

The Hiſtory *of Miſs* Sophia Dighton.

Lady Randal, whoſe auſtere character you are not unacquainted with, remain'd in England ſoon after her marriage, whilſt Sir Gregory went to Jamaica

Jamaica to ſettle ſome affairs of his deceaſed father's, who had been a very opulent merchant in that trade.

Sir Gregory ſtay'd abroad two years, in which time his lady, having many perſonal attractions, captivated the heart of a young cornet in the guards; — notwithſtanding her great prudence and exemplary virtue, he found means to lull her diſcretion aſleep; — he took advantage in an unguarded moment, and brought her on a level with thoſe poor wretches, againſt whom ſhe was always the firſt to exclaim with unpitying violence.

Sophia, being the conſequence of this amour, was born about four months before the return of Sir Gregory. — No living créature was privy to her birth, except one woman who had attended Lady Randal from her infancy.

Hannah, tho ſhe felt the moſt extreme ſorrow at this imprudent ſtep of her lady's, could not behold the affliction with which it was attended, or think of what the conſequence of a diſcovery would be, without trying and ſaying all in her power to alleviate her ladyſhip's diſtracting apprehenſions.

Lady Randal ſoon perceiv'd ſhe had every thing to expect from the compaſſionate tenderneſs of ſo faithful a ſervant, and ventur'd to propoſe, as the only means to ſave herſelf from the moſt ſcandalous infamy, that, as ſoon as the child made its appearance, ſhe ſhould convey it out of the kingdom.

Hannah had attended her lady, when a girl, at one of the moſt eminent French ſchools about London, and had acquired a tolerable knowledge of the language; a circumſtance which made Lady Randal fix on France for the retreat of her child.

— A

—A well-imagin'd plan this, and altogether as well executed.

Her Ladyſhip, ſome weeks before her delivery, retir'd from the world, under pretence of indulging a melancholy, contracted by frequent dreams, wherein ſhe had ſeen her huſband kill'd, ſhipwreck'd, or under ſome terrible diſaſter.

Every body blam'd her credulity, but none ever ſuſpected the real reaſon of her abſence, and when ſhe came back to receive Sir Gregory, ſhe was rallied by her friends and acquaintance, on the ſuperſtitious motive of her leaving them.

I cannot proceed with any other tranſactions in England, as I am uninform'd of them, except that Sophia's father died from a fall off his horſe, a few days before her birth, as he was giving chace to a ſtag, turned out by ſome noblemen, on Epping foreſt.

Whatever Lady Randal felt for the death of her lover was ſo carefully concealed, that Hannah, who never left her a moment, declares ſhe did not ſee the ſlighteſt appearance of concern; nay, aſſures me that, before the accident happened, ſhe had prevailed on her lady to promiſe, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that ſhe would never ſee him more if ſhe could avoid it, and on no pretence whatever would admit another viſit from him;—nor, 'till ſhe had obtained this promiſe, would the good creature undertake to manage a concealment, without which neither her reputation, or the love of her huſband, could have been preſerved.

Sophia was a month old when Lady Randal obliged Hannah to ſet out with her infant charge for a remote corner in France, the deſtined place of her future reſidence.—Juſt before their departure, her ladyſhip ſpoke to her in the following terms:——

" Hannah

"Hannah (ſaid ſhe) I am more obliged to you than I can poſſibly expreſs; but to make the obligation you lay me under quite complete, you muſt punctually perform what I am going to requeſt of you. — Ever ſince my unfortunate conduct I have not enjoyed one moment's quiet, leſt my hitherto unblemiſhed reputation ſhould ſuffer from it; — I do not mean particularly at this time, — no, it is a diſcovery, even from the moſt diſtant period, which I never ſhould ſurvive.

"Here, Hannah (continued ſhe), are bank-notes for fifteen hundred pounds. — You muſt, from this hour, conſider yourſelf the mother of that child, who, I confeſs, I cannot love, or even bear in my ſight, becauſe ſhe reminds me of my imprudence. — Take her with you to France; — if you ſtay in England my life will be a torment: — I muſt never ſee the little wretch again: — I muſt never even hear from you about her. — I ſhould not have inſiſted on your obſerving

this ſilence, was there not a poſſibility that your letters may fall into other hands than mine — therefore once more I charge you—never write. —Take the notes I offer;—in France, the ſum they contain will provide for you both genteelly.—I ſhall not trouble my head about the education you think proper to beſtow on Sophia;—it is enough that I am ſatisfied of your goodneſs of heart, and that alſo muſt be her ſecurity."

Well, Lady Anne, what think you of this parental charge?—I could ſpeak—but no: I will not clog this recital with my reflections.

Hannah wept when ſhe came to this part of her tale.—She aſſured me nothing, but being witneſs to the unconquerable averſion Lady Randal had taken againſt the innocent child, could have prevailed on her to comply with her ladyſhip's laſt and moſt unnatural propoſitions;—"but, (purſued ſhe) I felt ſuch fondneſs for the deſerted

deſerted orphan, that I came into all her meaſures, and ſoon after left England, hugging the ſweet ſmiling infant to my boſom."

Bleſs me, where am I proceeding? —Behold, my dear friend, I am running into the very words of this good woman, when I intended telling you the whole tale in my own. —I do it only for the ſake of brevity;—on all other accounts, I profeſs to your Ladyſhip, it will greatly loſe from the exchange.

Hannah's reſidence, for the firſt ten years, was fixed at the cheapeſt and moſt retired part of France, where, paſſing for a widow who bore the name of Drax, and aſſuming that of mother to her little charge, ſhe lived with ſuch ſtrict œconomy as very conſiderably increaſed her finances.

Sophia being arrived at the age of eleven, Hannah removed to Paris

and placed her in a celebrated nunnery. — The day on which ſhe conducted her thither, ſhe ſaid to her, " my dear child, you are now going to a place where you will be inſtructed in thoſe accompliſhments which it is neceſſary for you to attain: — neglect nothing to make yourſelf miſtreſs of every polite acquirement: —be indefatigable in your endeavours to improve: — perhaps you will one day find the improvements you now may make, of ſervice in rendering you dear to a perſon who can lift you above your preſent ſphere; — in trying to acquire the perfections I am now ſending you in purſuit of, forget that you are the child of an obſcure widow, who at her death can leave you only a few hundreds, that will make ſuch accompliſhments unneceſſary. — I would have you, my dear Sophia, rather conſider yourſelf as though you was born the daughter of ſome great lady, who can, whenever ſhe pleaſes, raiſe you to affluence."

The

The charming child, too young to underſtand this hint, threw her little arms about the neck of her ſuppoſed parent, and ſmiling in her face, "Why, my dear mother (ſaid ſhe) ſhould I ſuppoſe myſelf the child of a great lady?—Are not you my mamma?—I would not be any other perſon's daughter for the world —Indeed I will be a good girl, and learn every thing you bid me.

"No, no, my deareſt Sophia (cried the delightful creature, almoſt ſtifling her with careſſes) never ſhall you find a mother that loves you more, or half---half ſo fondly as I do;---but my dear little charmer muſt not forget to follow her improvements as though ſhe was the child of a much greater perſon."

Ah, Lady Anne! I am every moment a witneſs the lovely girl gave her faithful monitreſs no reaſon to complain, that her wiſe injunctions were neglected.---Never ſaw I any

young

young creature more perfectly accomplished:—every minute I ſpend in her company ſhews me ſome new perfection.

Sophia remain'd at her convent till ſhe enter'd her ſeventeenth year, when Hannah could not prevail on her to ſtay longer, becauſe her expences there made the old lady live more near than her dutiful heart could bear to be the occaſion of.

She had been home but a few months, in which time ſhe had lived perfectly retired, when going one day to attend divine ſervice at our ambaſſador's chapel, ſhe was followed home to the door of their little habitation by a footman in a rich livery; an incident which would have paſſed unnoticed, had not Hannah perceived him from the window. As to Sophia, ſhe never looked behind her, or if ſhe had, would very probably have entertained no ſuſpicion that he followed her.

That

That ſame afternoon ſhe got permiſſion of the perſon ſhe called and believed to be her mother, to viſit ſome former acquaintances at the convent.—Scarce five minutes had ſhe been gone from the houſe, when a young gentleman, plain but genteelly dreſſed, made his appearance.—Hannah, who has ſomething much above the common ſtile, both in manner and addreſs, received him with all the politeneſs ſhe could command.

"Madam, (ſaid the ſtranger) I was this morning at the ambaſſador's chapel, where I had the happineſs to ſee your daughter, a young lady whoſe perſon is ſo pleaſing, whoſe character ſo unexceptionable, that I have received from her a laſting impreſſion.—I am ſerious, madam, and ſhall be miſerable if you do not permit me to hope for the honour of her and your acquaintance.—My name is Stanley;—my fortune tolerable at preſent — will be much

increas'd after the death of an infirm father—my family reſpectable—my own character, I have the vanity to think, irreproachable.—I am juſt arrived in France;—if I have any ſatisfaction here, it muſt be from the honour of your acquaintance—if I have any felicity it muſt ariſe from your lovely, amiable daughter."

Hannah ſtill declares there was ſo much ſincerity in this man's appearance, that ſhe cannot, even now bring her heart to ſuſpect it.—In ſhort, it ſeems he talk'd himſelf ſo far into her good graces, that ſhe believed every word he uttered—ſhe thought him the fineſt gentleman in the world, and reſolved, if Sophia ſhould happen to be of the ſame opinion, not to obſtruct, but rather promote their union;—however ſhe very prudently veil'd her intentions, civilly inviting him to drink tea—which invitation he accepted with apparent ſatisfaction.

By

By chance the lady, whom Sophia went to ſee at the convent, had been ſent for that day by a perſon of quality, ſo that ſhe came back juſt as Hannah and her new acquaintance were ſeated at the tea-table.—The good creature confeſſed to me how much the unexpected preſence of Sophia delighted her; for by this time ſhe had no higher wiſh, than that her dear child might ſecure the heart of an admirer, who appeared, in her eye, the moſt accompliſhed man on earth.

Mr. Stanley, after going through a formal introduction, proteſted, with an air of tranſport, that he looked upon the return of Sophia as a miracle work'd by Fate in his favour, and ſoon, by the moſt paſſionate but reſpectful behaviour, made her underſtand to whom his viſit was intended.

Under the ſanction of a ſuppoſed parent, Miſs Dighton, without reluctance, conſented to his viſits, and

every

every interview convinced her more and more, of a diſintereſted, lively, ſincere attachment in the breaſt of her lover.

As ſhe ſeldom or ever ſtirred from the houſe, he ſpent almoſt all his hours in her company;—his whole ſtudy was to pleaſe—and the object of that ſtudy ſeemed to be his adored Sophia; yet, by what I can gather, his profeſſions of love were always delivered in general terms, that is, he did not make a direct offer of his hand—he would ſigh over her's—he would preſs it to his lips—to his boſom;—he would vow no other woman could ever make him happy—ſwear not to ſurvive the moment which made another man her huſband—wiſh that time arrived when he could preſent a fortune worthy her acceptance;—he would often aſk on what ſhe could be happy—he would preſs her warmly to tell him; ſhe has told him—ſhe has mentioned ſomething moderate, having

no

no immoderate wiſhes of expence to gratify;—he has devoured her words with rapture—he has gazed on her with admiration—he has called up the moſt tender concern to his countenance, and then cried out (preſſing her hand to his lips) "No, no, my angel! if you have goodneſs enough to be content with ſuch a narrow ſtipend, I love you too well to contract your views of happineſs;—there are a thouſand neceſſary accommodations not in the power of that little to beſtow, and I ſhould die to ſee you, by my means, cut off from any of them."

Hannah was very minute in telling me theſe things, as an apology, I ſuppoſe, for believing him ſincere in his affections.—How could they believe him otherwiſe, unexperienc'd as they were in the arts of that deceitful ſex!

After their acquaintance with Mr. Stanley had continued on this intimate

mate footing about ſix months, in which time, no doubt, Sophia's affections were very tenderly engaged, he one day ſent her a letter, ſignifying, that he had been drawn in by a party of his friends, when he leaſt intended it, to be preſent at the approaching carnival at Rome, and not able to take a perſonal leave for ſo long a ſeparation, choſe this method to bid her adieu, adding a thouſand proteſtations of love, fidelity, and promiſes of return; ſince which time they have neither ſeen him, or heard any thing concerning him.

Poſitively, if ever I ſpeak again to Sir William, I will enquire about this Mr. Stanley;—he may know ſomething of him:—I fear they are too much of a feather not to come under one of the vulgar proverbs.

I am arrived at the very brink of —— not a precipice, my dear Lady Anne, but of this paper, and muſt begin another letter to continue my narrative.

LET-

LETTER XXII.

MY faint patient has paſſed a charming night;—ſhe looks and ſpeaks ſo much better to-day than ſhe did yeſterday, that I begin to entertain the moſt flattering expectations.

I have juſt had a long chat with her, the ſubject Mr. Stanley, who I diſcover ſhe does not abſolutely condemn of infidelity:—a thouſand accidents may detain him in Rome—letters may miſcarry—he may, at this very time, be ſeeking her in France.—This, I perceive, is the manner in which ſhe argues with her heart, though her tongue has not declared it ſo plainly.—Alas! how natural this kind of credulity, where we are loth to quit an attachment which is pleaſing to us—which we have believed lively, ſincere and tender.—But, to continue my adventures——

Mr.

Mr. Stanley had taken himſelf from France but a few days, when Hannah was attacked by a diſorder, ſo very violent as ſeemed to baffle the force of medicine.—Sophia, with a moſt dutiful attention, watched continually in her chamber; nor could all the good creature's intreaties prevail on her to leave it, even for an hour.

One day, whilſt her phyſician was preſent, ſhe purpoſely ſent Miſs Dighton below ſtairs, under ſome pretence of buſineſs, whilſt ſhe warmly aſked him his real ſentiments of her diſorder, and whether he thought there were any hopes of her recovery?—Seeing the ſteadineſs with which this queſtion was propoſed, and being again preſſed for his opinion, he gave it negatively; yet the young lady, entering at that moment, could not trace any alteration on the countenance of her ſuppoſed mother, which might raiſe a ſuſpicion of what had paſſed in her abſence.

No

No ſooner had the gentleman of the faculty taken himſelf away, than ſhe called Sophia to her bed-ſide, pointed to a chair, and beckoned her to be ſeated.

"My deareſt Sophia (ſaid ſhe, ſeizing her hand, which ſhe preſſed ſeveral times to her mouth) I may ſoon be called upon to leave you—God knows how very ſoon—perhaps this hour may be my laſt!—Do not weep!—In me you ſhall not loſe a parent—you ſhall gain a mother by my death.—When I found my latter moment approaching, I determined not to conceal it longer;—ſhould I carry it to my grave, I fear my heavenly Creator would reject the ſoul which flies to him for mercy.—I will not riſque his divine diſpleaſure:—juſtice—affection—humanity—bids me tell you that you are not my child—that I am only the poor ſervant of your natural parent."

It

It is not for me to deſcribe the agitation of Sophia on hearing ſo ſtrange a declaration.—Hannah, when ſhe came to ſpeak of her tender emotions on this occaſion, could give me little or no idea of it;---ſhe wept —ſhe ſobbed—ſhe could only tell me, ſhe thought her dear child would have expired.

It ſeemed as if Heaven approved the important diſcovery:---from the very hour in which it was made Hannah grew better, and in a few weeks was ſo well recovered as to undertake the management of her little family.

From the time Sophia became acquainted with her birth, and its attendant circumſtances (none of which were concealed) from that time, tho' her duty for Hannah rather increaſed than abated, yet ſhe feli into a kind of languor and melancholy, part of which I cannot, for my life, help attributing to Mr. Stanley's abſence,

and

and the doubts which, perhaps, ſhe was then beginning to entertain.

Hannah, alarmed at ſo unfavourable a change in the health and ſpirits of Sophia, preſſed her very warmly to reveal the cauſe, and finding ſhe pined to throw herſelf at the feet of her mother, ſhe got over every retarding conſideration to gratify the dutiful impulſe of her beloved charge.

In conſequence of this reſolution ſhe wrote to Lady Randal, who ſhe found was now a widow, informing her Ladyſhip with what ſecrecy ſhe had obſerved the truſt repoſed in her, 'till fear of leaving Sophia unprotected tore it from her boſom.—She then related all that happened in her late ſickneſs—ſhe ſpoke of Sophia's impatience to receive a parent's bleſſing—ſhe mentioned the ill effects that impatience had already produced on her health and ſpirits—ſhe ſaid, to avoid being the murderer of a lovely amiable child, ſhe had reſolved

reſolved to bring her to England, and reſtore her to her ladyſhip's arms, which ſhe hoped would be no longer ſhut againſt ſo deſerving a daughter.

After writing thus, ſhe began to conſider on the diſpoſition of the perſon ſhe addreſſed, and, in order to reconcile her to the preſence of her deſerted child, very politically concluded her letter in the following manner: ——

"Your ladyſhip's reputation is ſtill my care; — I would die rather than it ſhould ſuffer from any action of mine! — It is true that I have diſcovered to Sophia that you are her mother, but ſhe will never preſume to call you by that tender appellation. — You had a ſiſter, madam, who married unfortunately — who went abroad with her huſband; — they are both dead: — my dear young lady, in England, will paſs for a child of that match; — on a niece you may

ſafely

ſafely laviſh thoſe endearments your charming daughter cannot fail of exciting—no body will wonder at your fondneſs for her.—Further, let me venture to aſſure your ladyſhip, you will, when I bring this beautiful creature to your arms, regret nothing more than the laſt eighteen years, in which ſhe has been excluded from them."

* * * * * *

If you remember, my dear Lady Anne, juſt before their arrival at the farm I mentioned to you, that Lady Randal's humour had been inſupportable for a fortnight paſt, and, according to my calculation, it muſt commence at the time ſhe received Hannah's very honeſt, and very ſenſible epiſtle.—I can now account for her ladyſhip's turning pale, and her precipitation in quitting the room, when ſhe ſaw Sophia and her companion alight from their carriage.—The former ſhe could have no idea of; but eighteen years of abſence had

not, it ſeems, eraſed from her memory a perfect knowledge of the latter.

I told your ladyſhip in what manner ſhe left me, and you know, ſoon after, being alarmed by the violence of the bell, I flew to her room, where I found the gentle Sophia and her ungentle mother in a ſituation already deſcribed.—What muſt have been her reception?—Indeed, when Hannah repeated it to me I ſhuddered with horror.—Oh, moſt cruel woman! if I truſt myſelf on this heart-rending ſubject, thy aſhes will not eſcape my juſt expreſſions of reſentment.

The only moment in which this unrelenting parent betrayed the leaſt ſymptom of maternal love, was in the little ſummer-houſe, which ſcene from my window I chanced to witneſs!—even there, Sophia could only prevail on her to ſay, ſhe would not hate her, proteſting at the ſame inſtant, that ſhe muſt never expect any

public mark of fondneſs, and declared ſhe would rather ſee a thouſand children dead at her feet, nay, follow them herſelf the next moment, than that her reputation ſhould ſuffer a ſingle blemiſh.

Do you now, my friend, ſee the reaſon for poor Sophia's being ſent away? or can you not now account for the caution Lady Randal obſerved, of never leaving me alone with her?—How very ſuſpicious is guilt!—and how very—very guilty was Lady Randal!

Theſe particulars, which I have now given you, are collected from the information Hannah delivered me, at the requeſt of Miſs Dighton, who, when ſhe made that requeſt, was reduced to the moſt extreme affliction.

* * * * * *

I told your ladyſhip her almoſt frantic impatience to plead for a laſt

bleſſing:—my heart was tore aſunder:—I could not refuſe, yet dreaded to comply.—At laſt, the fear that oppoſition would be fatal to her reaſon determined me.—I went to the bedſide of Lady Randal.—Oh! how I ſhuddered as I drew aſide the curtain, and ſaw this hardened parent ſtriving for breath! yet I felt my heart invironed by compaſſion—I melted into tears—I whiſpered to myſelf, May theſe ſtruggles, oh heaven! be the only puniſhment for her crimes!—I ſtaid by her ſeveral minutes, before I could ſay, Sophia waited for permiſſion to attend her!—at length, with a faultering tongue, I ventured to pronounce it.—O God, the ſcreech ſhe gave ſtill rings through my head!—It was ſo terrible, that had I not caught hold of the bed, I ſhould certainly have fallen;—her breath grew ſhorter;---ſhe cried no! no! no! in a muffled voice, hardly articulate, and giving another ſcream, Death threw his dark curtain before her eyes—ſhe ſaw no more---ſhe heard

no

no more.---Forgive me, Lady Anne! I muſt hurry from a ſcene too full of horror, even for deſcription.

I cannot ſay the death of Lady Randal would have greatly affected me, becauſe, whilſt ſhe lived, her amiable daughter could never have been happy; but the ſuddenneſs of her diſſolution, the manner in which it happen'd, and being preſent at the time, gave me ſo ſevere a ſhock, that I could not go to Sophia's chamber for more than two hours: when I did go, it will be needleſs to repeat in what words I broke, or in what manner ſhe received, the fatal event.

A thouſand times ſince that diſtreſſing moment has ſhe cried out, "now indeed, my deareſt mother, I have no parent but you!" and flung herſelf on the boſom of her fond weeping Hannah.---Dear good woman, how amiable is thy tender-

neſs!—What a contraſt!—Here I drop my pen—I fear to what lengths it may proceed.—I will again think of her laſt ſtruggles, or my compaſſion will take its flight.

LET-

LETTER XXIII.

HOW comfortable is it, my dear friend, when the whole earth ſeems to be envelop'd in a foggy mantle, to behold the ſun mildly playing its beams through the obſtructive clouds, and ſmiling the creation into chearfullneſs, — how much more comfortable when the animal ſpirits are obſcured by gloomy ideas, to feel the rays of hope dancing round the heart, and flattering into ſerenity every unpleaſing apprehenſion. — This, at preſent is my ſituation — Sophia will recover; my fears, on her account, are almoſt over — I ſhall ſoon ſhake every thought from my boſom, which has aſſailed it in the ſhape of horror. —

Miſs Dighton is ſo much better to-day, that her bodily phyſician, you know I am only to take care of her mind, has order'd her to be carried in a ſedan round the garden, or a

little further, if ſhe can bear the exerciſe — ſhe is to ſet out exactly at twelve — the moment is at hand — I will go and ſee her into the chair — then return to you for half an hour, or, at leaſt, for as many minutes as ſhe continues on her excurſion.

* * * * * * *

I have ſtayed longer from my pen than I intended — who do you think has detain'd me — why even Sir William Lovedale; an interview, on my part, unconcerted, unexpected, but, I confeſs, not unpleaſing, as I wanted to aſk him about Mr. Stanley.

O my dear! this Sir William — this honourable man is the moſt paſſionate lover that ever ſtooped to offer incenſe of flattery at my altar. I chatted with him only for a few minutes, and then took my leave, under pretence of writing ſome London letters, which I was obliged to forward by this poſt; he ſeem'd, I aſſure

aſſure you, to quit me with reluctance, but I had no further buſineſs with him, after half a dozen queſtions about the perſon of whom I wanted to be informed.

He either knows, or elſe pretends to know, nothing of Sophia's lover: yet, I am ſometimes apt to judge the name of Stanley is not quite new to him; for though he denied an acquaintance with any ſuch perſon, I ſaw him ſmile in a manner which made me think that if he knew any thing about him, it was not in his favour: — Sir William is eſteemed a good natured man, and, perhaps, from a motive of good nature, if he knew ill of Mr. Stanley, he might conceal it.

In the name of wonder, Lady Anne, how can a man of Sir William's principles come under the appellation of good nature? — I think I ſhould make the ſame obſervation by him as I once heard a very learn-

ed and ſenſible man do by a certain nobleman, no longer number'd with the living. — Some one ſaying his lordſhip was a good natur'd man, " you are miſtaken (replied my " friend) he is a good temper'd, bad " natur'd man.

When I aſk'd Sir William if he knew Mr. Stanley, of ——— ſhire (which queſtion, without being dragged, fortunately dropp'd into our converſation) he fixed his eyes upon my face, and begged I would tell him if I enquired from any particular reaſon, and I thought (but it may be fancy) that he looked a little ſilly ſome how, as if he feared a rival. — Theſe kind of men, though they are ſeldom made jealous by love, are often a prey to that paſſion through vanity. — Your ladyſhip may ſuppoſe I did not tell him my real reaſon; I really forgot my anſwer; if I had not, believe me, 'twould be ſcarce worth tranſmitting you.

I expect, when my fair friend is enough recovered to receive the viſits of her neighbours (for you are to know this houſe, and the little manor annexed to it, worth about two thouſand pounds, is the only fortune Lady Randal bequeathed her) I expect, I ſay, ſhe will, when ſhe ſees company, in her turn engage the heart, at leaſt the notice, of this rover. — He had beſt marry his Lucy, or I will draw Sophia into my plan againſt him: I am ſure, when I tell her the ſtory of that poor girl, ſhe will not refuſe me an aiding hand. — I have not a ſtrong deſire to ſee him attached to Miſs Dighton, though, believe me, 'tis the furtheſt from my wiſhes to ſee that attachment mutual: — unleſs he does juſtice to his Lucy, I would have him in love with her, with me, in ſhort, with all the females of my acquaintance: — the work I have undertaken is of ſuch a nature, that I cannot well have too many aſſiſtants.

As

As my deſign is to captivate him with the perſon of Sophia, in the full glow of beauty, I was glad, for that reaſon he eſcaped ſeeing her in the languid ſituation ſhe is now reduced to. — There were many chances againſt me, that he had not ſeen her juſt now, as ſhe was carrying through the lobby: — I attended her to the door — he entered at that inſtant, and I ſaw him glance his eye into the chair as he paſſed it: — the glaſſes were down, by order of her phyſician, who ſaid ſhe could not have too much air, provided it was ſtrained through the curtains, ſo that they being cloſely drawn, Sir William could not poſſibly diſtinguiſh her emaciated figure. — This incident was fortunate enough, for though, thank heaven, I have no doubt of the lovely Sophia's being ſoon reſtored to health and beauty, yet ſuch an object as ſhe appeared to be, after I had placed her in the chair, ſeemed but indifferently armed for conqueſt.

" *Upon*

" *Upon its mourning ſtalk it bangs*
" *the head,*
" *So pale, ſo ſhrunk, ſo without life*
" *it ſhews,*
" *That one can hardly ſay, this was*
" *a roſe,*"

The ſervant who preceded her chair is this moment in ſight of my window; I ſuppoſe ſhe is not many yards behind: — yes, ſhe is here already. — Lord bleſs me, how the fellows trot along with their charming burthen! — I muſt go to her — I hope to find ſhe is much the better for this little airing. — Adieu!

LET-

LETTER XXIV.

SOphia! Oh Sophia! — Lady Anne I am diſtracted. — Why did I let her go out without me? — She is returned! — Alas! how did ſhe return? — Without ſenſe — without ſpeech without motion. — Ah, Lady Anne, I am half frantic! — Good God! I flew to her chair — the fellows ſat her down — they lifted up its head — I looked in to aſk how ſhe did. — Oh heaven, what a ſight! — Sunk down in the bottom lay the breathleſs trunk of my ſweet dear friend, my excellent, my amiable Sophia. — I cannot be particular! — She breathes again! — Doctor Alford is come — I fly to know her doom: — he may reſtore me to eaſe; — he cannot add to my afflictions.

LET-

LETTER XXV.

GOOD God, I thank thee! — never can I be grateful enough for thy mercies! — Oh, Lady Anne, Doctor Alford has ſtill hopes — great hopes! — I am lifted above myſelf: — Sophia has ſeen my diſtreſs — ſhe has wept — ſhe has wetted my face with her tears — ſhe ſpeaks to me — ſhe tells me ſhe ſhall live — ſhe ſays ſhe has been terrified. — Ah! by what has ſhe been terrified? — I can write no more! — I know not what I write! — My grief — my joy — my hopes and fears are ſo intermingled together, that they agitate my heart, and confound my reaſon.

LET-

LETTER XXVI.

WHAT am I to think? — Has Sophia really ſeen her lover or is it a viſion, the effects of a diſturbed imagination? — Yes, Lady Anne, ſhe aſſures me ſhe has ſeen him — that ſhe ſaw him this morning. — She went no further than the garden: — how could Mr. Stanley come there? — Yet ſhe repeats to me, ſhe has ſeen him: — if I miſtake not, ſhe ſaid too, that ſhe had ſeen him in my company. — Oh, heavens and earth, if Sir William! — My dear lady, a thought this moment occurs to me — I begin to entertain ſtrange ſuſpicions — I ſhall not be at reſt till they are either aboliſhed or confirmed.

LET-

LETTER XXVII.

CONfirmed! yes, my friend, they are confirmed! —— I thought there could not exiſt in the world two ſuch men as Sir William Lovedale and Mr. Stanley. — No! there can be, there is but one, and that one the wretch — the very wretch who firſt ſeduced the affections of poor Lucy, then of my amiable Sophia. — The puniſhment I intended him would have been too light — it would only have mortified, or perhaps expoſed him: — I drop it from this moment. — Where I drop it may heaven take it up! — May the ſcorpion whip of conſcience purſue him till he has ſeverely ſmarted for his perfidy! — I do not wonder he looked abaſhed, when I aſked him about that man he had baſely perſonated. — I only wonder he could ſmile. — Yes, he had the audacity to ſmile. — Monſtrous cruelty! — He muſt

muſt, no doubt, think that moment of Sophia, yet he ſmiled — the incorrigeable ſavage ſmiled. — If ſhe ſhould die, he ſhall ſee the beautiful fabric he has laid in ruins; — yes, I am reſolved he ſhall ſee her. — Will he ſmile then? Will he ſmile when he beholds thoſe eyes which he has drowned in tears — which he has drowned in tears — which he has dimned with ſadneſs — cloſed in death. — I cannot bear the thought, yet, if ſhe is torn from me, this ſight he ſhall not eſcape.

I told you he paſs'd her chair in the lobby: he could not ſee her, on account of the curtains being cloſed, but ſhe ſaw him, and from that moment felt a ſuſpenſion of her ſorrows. — She had before given directions to her chairmen how far ſhe would be carried; they obeyed her orders, and then returned to the houſe, during which time ſhe continued ſenſeleſs. — Oh! ſhall I ever more endure the ſight of the villain

villain who reduced her to this ſtate? —Yes, I will endure his ſight — I will even court him to my preſence — and then deaden him with my reproaches.

I am juſt informed Mrs. Bond is below, and has brought a young lady with her; — it can be no other than Lucy: — I long yet dread to ſee her: — methinks my heart is now almoſt in as continual emotions, on account of this man, as if intimately concerned in his infidelities: — I proteſt to heaven, I had rather it was eternally ſilenced, than that it ſhould ever flutter — ever beat for ſuch a wretch as Sir William. — O Sophia! would to God you had never ſeen him! — Lucy, you have the ſame unavailing prayer. — I go to you — I will embrace — I will pity — but cannot comfort you.

LET-

LETTER XXVIII.

I Am more and more charmed with Mrs. Bond, nor leſs prejudiced in favour of her engaging ward.—Upon my word, Sir William, it muſt be confeſſed your taſte does not want refinement.—Had your heart as little wanted honour, your Lucy might have been exulting in happineſs—my Sophia bleſſed with health—triumphing in eaſe.

"I come, madam (ſaid Mrs. Bond, leading towards me a very lovely young creature) to preſent to you this good girl, who is ambitious to kiſs your hands before we leave D———."—I ſaluted Miſs Wellford, and aſſured Mrs. Bond ſhe could not have conferred on me a more pleaſing mark of diſtinction; but I hope, madam, added I, turning to her ward, you will not cruelly rob me of my agreeable neighbour, at leaſt till I have

have an opportunity of trying to engage her eſteem.

Lucy anſwerd very obligingly, that it was mine long before ſhe ſaw me, and now ſo effectually ſecured, that no time or diſtance ſhould have the power of removing it.

I thanked her—I was really delighted—I cannot deſcribe the pretty grace of her manner.

After we had taken our places I ſtole a glance at Mrs. Bond, which I intended ſhould aſk her whether ſhe had ſeen Sir William, and if I might mention his name before Miſs Wellford.

She underſtood my queſtion, and gave the following reply: ——

"I have ſeen Sir William, madam — I have talked with him. — To-morrow we leave this county." — Here ſhe ſtopp'd.

He attends you, ladies? ——

No:

"No: never more ſhall he ſee my Lucy. — From you, madam, I can conceal nothing. Sir William is unworthy thoſe affections of which he has been too long poſſeſſed."

The young lady was ſilent — her eyes fixed on the ground — her colour perpetually changing.

My opinion was ſo entirely with Mrs. Bond, and I felt ſo much compaſſion for Lucy, who I ſaw was ſtill under the infatuation of a miſplaced paſſion, that I reſolved to try all in my power to root it from her boſom.

May I preſume to aſk you one queſtion, madam? — Pardon me Mrs. Bond! — Pardon me, Miſs Wellford! — If I am impertinent, ladies, it is not from a bad motive.

Lucy only bowed her head.

"You can aſk no queſtion, madam (ſaid Mrs. Bond) but will lay us under

under new obligations. — You are intereſted for us: --- I ſay us: --- my happineſs can never be ſeparated from Miſs Wellford's, who has ſo many years been the darling child of my affection."

Here ſhe was interrupted by the grateful girl, who, with a ſweet and graceful motion, took the hand of her kind friend, and ſaid, whilſt the tears ſtole down her bluſhing cheek, "I have given you, madam, and my dear guardian, too much trouble already: — I will endeavour ſo to act for the future, that you ſhall have no more on the ſame occaſion. — I have been deceiv'd in the man on whom my heart fondly depended; — he has robbed me of that chearfulneſs which uſed to delight you, — I can — I will recal it again! — Never more ſhall his idea make me uneaſy, either to myſelf or you."

Excellent, Miſs Wellford!—charming reſolution! — This I ſaid, whilſt Mrs.

Mrs. Bond fondly embraced her darling.

"You have heard, madam, what my child has promiſed. — I am pleaſed — I am happy — I am ſatisfied. — Her word is yet unforfeited."

I congratulate you both, my dear Mrs. Bond! — But you ſay you have ſeen Sir William — may I aſk? — Forgive me, madam, if ——

"No apology, my good young lady! — I have ſeen — I have talked with him. — I am aſſured, if not of his perfidy, at leaſt of his unſteadineſs. — I am aſſured he can never make my Lucy happy."

May I aſk you, madam (turning to Lucy) if you could ſupport the ſhock of conviction, ſhould I convince you he is not only the moſt unſteady, but the moſt cruel — the moſt unpardonable of men?

"Indeed

" Indeed I could (replied ſhe,) --- Pray madam proceed! --- I thank heaven, and my ever dear Mrs. Bond, that I do not want reſolution to diſregard the man who has proved himſelf unworthy my attachment."

Pleaſed to ſee her cure ſo far advanced, I reſolved to complete it before ſhe left the houſe, and making but one concealment, which was the name of the perſon it concerned, I laid before them the whole ſtory of Sophia.

Never ſaw I more greatneſs of ſoul — more pity — more reſentment, than my tale produced in the words, the looks, the actions of Miſs Wellford: — ſpontaneouſly ſhe ſunk upon her knees, and, whilſt the tears trickled down her face, ſhe ſeemed to lift a ſilent prayer to heaven for the recovery of Sophia --- then, with a countenance ſtrongly expreſſing the deteſtation ſhe felt for Sir William, " great God (ſaid ſhe) I thank thee!"

and running into the arms of Mrs. Bond (for we were both riſen) — "take me, madam! — the operation was dreadful, but the cure is performed — never again will the wound open. — Take me to my other honoured guardian — but ah! no longer let us live in the neighbourhood of Sir William!"

"We will not, my deareſt love! (ſaid Mrs. Bond) — I rejoice at this conqueſt over yourſelf — you ſhall remove to any part of England — you ſhall go, do, and act as you pleaſe: — you have only to propoſe your inclinations to Mr. Bond, I am ſure he will comply with them. — Is there any particular county, my dear, to which you would give the preference?"

"I think there is, madam, but I am unacquainted with its name. — Will you, my dear phyſician (turning to me) will you direct me where to find it?"

I could

I could not help catching her in my arms at this kind hint, and ſeconding what I knew ſhe meant with all my force, Mrs. Bond gave us a promiſe, that, ſoon as they had ſettled ſome affairs where they now live, ſhe would prevail on her huſband to remove into the neighbourhood of my father.

This engagement ſeemed to affect us equally with pleaſure, and leſſen'd the regret of parting.—I would have kept them longer, but they politely told me, as I had a ſick friend, it would be cruel to detain me from her.

Little do they think that ſick friend is the perſon for whom they have ſo unſparingly ſhed the tear of compaſſion. — My thoughts wander from Sophia to Lucy — from Lucy to Sophia: — I can fix them on no other objects.

LETTER XXIX.

AH, my dear Lady Anne, I will not flatter myſelf!—There is no hope!—I am blinded with my tears!

LET-

LETTER XXX.

I Write to you, my friend, as I can now find leiſure. — I was call'd to my dying Sophia.—She is abſolutely dying—I am called upon inceſſantly—I go to her room—I come back to my own — I take up my pen—I write a line, perhaps two—then ruſhes a torrent from my ſorrow-ſtreaming eyes — my ſight fails — I lay it down again—I look round me —I ſee her dear image in every part of my chamber.—How dreadful—how ſudden the alteration!—Yeſterday I had hopes—to-day they are fled.

An abſceſs in her liver, form'd by trouble, broke this morning:—the diſcharge was more than her waſted health could ſupport.—She now lies ſtruggling for life.—If I had not afflictions of my own to paint on this occaſion, what a pity-moving picture could I give your ladyſhip of poor Hannah's.—I am called again.

LETTER XXXI.

OH, my dear friend, ſuch a ſcene!—A laſt adieu!—Yet ſhe is not dead.—I muſt try to recover myſelf.—I have tried—the taſk was vain.---I muſt proceed, diſtreſſed, afflicted as I am.

Never, till this laſt moment, did ſhe confeſs—yet I always thought it.—Her heart breaks—yes, Lady Anne, her valuable heart is breaking.---Need I explain for whom?—Need I pronounce the hated name of Lovedale?---Surely heaven, after it has taken to its boſom the ſpotleſs victim, ſurely it will not let her murtherer go unpuniſh'd!

When I approached the bed, her ſpirits ſeemed rather better than when I left her; but Death had laid his diſfiguring hand upon her face, and, in glaring characters, ſcrawled his horrid name on every feature.

Her

Her head reclined on the boſom of her Hannah, but ſeeing me, ſhe lifted it on the pillow, deſired to be raiſed on the bed, and requeſted every body, except myſelf and her dear mother (as ſhe always called her Hannah) would leave the room.

Theſe orders were obeyed; but, with the fatigue of being ſupported in her bed, ſhe was quite faint, and breathleſs. — I ſunk down on my knees by her ſide --- I held hartſhorn to her noſe, and trembled with apprehenſion, fancying I ſaw, at that moment, her pure ſoul taking flight to its eternal manſions.

So ſtrongly was the expectation of her immediate diſſolution impreſſed upon me, that when ſhe ſpoke — when ſhe laid her icy hand on mine, I thought it almoſt a reſurrection — I ſtarted — I felt a gleam of hope, as though the ſound of her voice could have ſtopped the cruel force of her

diſorder, for which, alas! there is no remedy.

"My deareſt friends (ſaid the ſweet creature) you muſt not be too much afflicted. — God Almighty is very merciful — he lends me to you yet a few moments — he ſuffers my ſoul ſtill to linger in its dark abode — I am permitted to ſpeak to you once again — to comfort you — to intreat you, that my dear good God may not receive me from your arms, to thoſe of his bleſſed mercy, thus reluctantly.—He can—he will unite us."

The laſt words quivered on her lips, and again ſhe fainted.—Whilſt I write, tears drop faſt on my paper. — What generous concern would it ſpare my dear Lady Anne, could they waſh away thoſe characters that will otherwiſe make her a ſharer in my diſtreſs!

A deep ſtab is felt, at firſt, with leſs anguiſh than a ſlight ſcratch; ſo

ſo violent ſhocks of ſorrow, I often think, are leſs exquiſitely felt than moderate ſtrokes of affliction, at leaſt I am ſure it was the caſe with me in that dreadful ſcene I have juſt paſſed.—No anguiſh could be greater than mine, whilſt I ſaw Sophia breathe, whilſt I heard her ſpeak; but when, a moment after, I beheld her head fall back—her eyes cloſed—her breath fled—her voice ſtopped—what I then felt could ſcarce be called anguiſh—I would rather give it the term of ſtupefaction.

Before this terrible fit, which laſted near twenty minutes, I ſhall draw the curtain of ſilence; yet do not think, my friend, your ſympathetic tryals are all over; no, they muſt again be renewed, when I deſcribe a ſcene the moſt heart-melting I ever witneſſed. — If your heart ſhould ſhrink—if you fear to be a ſpectator, turn away your eyes—follow it no further — let not your ears be open to the words of Sophia.

"My mother — my friend — I trace on your kind faces what the emotions of your hearts have been." Then throwing her livid arms about our necks, as we ſupported her between us, "tell me now, and tell me ſincerely, how long I have lain inſenſible!"—and ſhe ſmiled upon us with ſuch angelic ſerenity as made me fancy I already ſaw the beams of glory playing on her countenance.

My deareſt dear creature (for I ſaw her poor Hannah could not command a word) we are greatly to blame — we have ſuffer'd you to fatigue yourſelf, by attempting to change your poſture: — you have been faint, but, thank God, your fit is now over.

"You do not ſay, how long I continued inſenſible."

I cannot exactly tell—I believe about ten minutes. — But why does my Sophia aſk?

"You

"You ſhall know why I am ſo inquiſitive (ſtill ſweetly ſmiling, her voice leſs low and tremorous than it had been ſome hours before.) — A good God, who is kindly drawing me towards himſelf, tenderly compaſſionates the regret with which you, my deareſt friends, reſign me to him. —You ſay I have lain inſenſible ten minutes.—Theſe ſhort abſences are kindly ſent to wean me, by degrees, from you.—Reflect when you ſaw me laſt without life, without motion — ſuppoſe with yourſelves I was then really dead, and ſuppoſe at this time it is my ſpirit only that is permitted to return, to ſooth, to comfort you— to aſſure you I am going where I ſhall meet the glorious reward of a ſhort, unfortunate, but well-ſpent life."

Our grief was not dumb, neither did it find a vent in words, while the angel proceeded thus:—

"You muſt not, my friends, conſider me as a young fortunate creature,

ture, ſurrounded by flattering proſpects, and cut off in the midſt of my career to happineſs;—conſider me rather as a poor weary wretch, loaded with misfortunes, and glad to lay her head upon the cold lap of earth early in the day, without a wiſh to purſue a dreary journey, which never ſhewed one pleaſing, one inviting proſpect, but ſuch as was obſcured before my eye had well reached it."

—I ſhall often, very often, Lady Anne, think of theſe words:—I hope they will, ſome time hence, enable me to reflect on her early death without that violent concern I feel at preſent, though the occaſions of it will always fill me with horror. —What fatal inſtruments! a mother's cruelty! a lover's infidelity!—O heavens! mother, lover, did I ſay?—Is it poſſible I could mean Lady Randal and Sir William Lovedale.

In my firſt converſation with Sophia, after ſhe had by accident ſeen the

the ſavage, I told her he was not worthy her attention—I told her his real name—that Stanley was one he had aſſumed, and concealed nothing from her but the affair of Lucy, which, I did, leſt ſhe might reproach herſelf from being, though innocently, the cauſe of drawing his affections from that young lady.

Notwithſtanding the deep concern I ſaw imprinted on her countenance at the time this converſation happened, yet her tongue was ſilent: never till our laſt interview could ſhe bring it to that confeſſion, which, with a view to my quiet, ſhe then in theſe words greatly pronounced:——

"Beware, madam, of Sir William Lovedale!—His viſits, his aſſiduities to the friend I dearly love have alarmed me.—I know his inſinuations—I am too well experienc'd in his art of pleaſing.—To you I will ſacrifice my pride.—Fly from his inſidious addreſſes, leſt another ſhould

weep

weep your fate as you now weep mine!—Do not ſpeak!—(for my lips were dividing)—I muſt not hear---I muſt not think any more of a ſubject that will remind me of my weakneſs!—that will, perhaps, diſturb my laſt moments." — There was ſomething in her air, as ſhe pronounced theſe words, ſo very piercing that I could not ſtand it longer---I kiſs'd her hand, I bathed it with my tears, and flew to my apartment.

Never more ſhall I behold her living—dead I am determined to ſee her—nor will I be the only ſpectator: —there is a wretch I would ſtiffen into horror at ſight of her dear remains.—Adieu, Lady Anne!— The bare idea pleaſes me.

LET-

LETTER XXXII.

I Have ſent to Sir William Lovedale—I every moment expect him—he promiſes to be punctual. Nothing but his preſence can now ſatisfy me.

I have paſſed the night without ſleep.—"At the dawning of the morn, about that mongrel hour which, gotten betwixt night and day, is half an Ethiop and half white," I left my bed:—at that unſeaſonable hour—I left it to prepare for the reception of Sir William.

"You that received my firſt cry receive my lateſt groan!—Thoſe maternal arms which were then my cradle ſupport me now!"—Theſe were the laſt words of Sophia, as ſhe ſunk upon the boſom of her Hannah.—Is this enough to give your ladyſhip an idea of my ſituation?

Sir William comes.—I fly to him.—Ah! with what impatience!

LET-

LETTER XXXIII.

I Have heard his groans — I have ſeen his convulſive terrors -- my heart ſtill feeds upon them — they are food for my famiſh'd vengeance — my eyes are feaſted — my revenge ſatiated with beholding — for any other man I ſhould have felt compaſſion ——— to compaſſionate him would have been an injury, an inſult to the aſhes of my Sophia.

I told you he was come — let me conſider — let me try to recollect — I wiſh to be minute — I would not loſe one heſitating ſyllable — one guilty look.

Had Lucy heard him as I heard him — had ſhe ſeen him as I ſaw him — but I will not anticipate —— yet, Lord bleſs me, my head is ſo confuſed — my ſpirits are ſo diſcompoſed — my ideas ſo fluctuating, that

that I ſcarce know when and where to begin.

Thump, thump, thump, beat my ſwelling heart as I proceeded to the room, where I had ordered Sir William to be conducted — I went only to the door — I could go no further --- I returned to my chamber --- fell upon my knees, implored heaven that I might paſs the trying ſcene with fortitude, and found myſelf reaſſured.

I ſtrove to forget that I was going to receive the murtherer of Sophia, and, making another effort, enter'd to him with all the eaſe and unconcern I could poſſibly aſſume.

He accoſted me with that diſſembling air of tenderneſs, ſo fatal to the peace, to the life of my friend, and, not knowing the life I had ſuſtained (for I had ordered the death of Sophia to be concealed 'till this interview was over) he expreſſed himſelf

ſelf with great eloquence, on the honour conferred upon him by my meſſage, and politely ſaid, he waited only to know my commands, before he flew to execute them.

Having ſummon'd up all my reſolution, I reſolved to ſpeak, but firſt threw my averted eyes on the ground to avoid meeting his, at leaſt, till I could ſee them ſtarting with horror from their orbits —— at preſent they were full of inſinuating ſoftneſs, for that reaſon, in my ſight, more dreadful than the deadly baſiliſk's.

You muſt pardon, Sir William, ſaid I, with greater firmneſs of voice than ever I expected to be miſtreſs of on this occaſion, the liberty I have taken in deſiring your company, at a time when my mind is under the utmoſt agitation.

"For God's ſake, my dear madam, why apologize for conferring a favour on the man who, I ſeriouſly proteſt, it is only in your power to make

make happy?" --- And he took my hand.

O how his touch ſhuddered me! I thought of Sophia's laſt cold preſſure, when ſhe warn'd me againſt his arts --- I trembled from head to foot, and drew away my hand with ſuch eagerneſs as muſt have ſhewn my averſion, had he not been blinded by that kind of perſonal vanity which ſcarce any mortification can penetrate.

I have been prevailed on (continued I) Sir William, to engage your preſence by a motive of reſentment: --- a juſt indignation is the incentive by which I am puſhed on to wiſh and intreat your company.

" How highly am I diſtinguiſhed, madam! --- Can you doubt of my beſt aſſiſtance? --- By heaven, I would ſtab my heart to convince you of its ſincerity!"

When

When he ſaid this, I gave a ſigh to the memory of Sophia — another to Lucy — both which, I ſuppoſe, he placed to his own account; for he looked full of pleaſure, and begged me to proceed, with an air of the moſt paſſionate attention, which, after a moment's conſideration, I did in this manner: —

I have a friend, Sir William, the moſt amiable, lovely and accompliſhed woman on earth; — her alliance is great — her fortune affluent; — but, for reaſons which I am not at liberty to diſcloſe, till within a few months ſhe has lived perfectly retired in France. — At preſent, her ſituation is to be greatly envied, even by the moſt happy; — but, before ſhe was thus exalted, a man without generoſity, without ſentiment, without one principle of honour — a man who called himſelf Stanley ——

It was now his turn to tremble: — his agitation was viſible.

Pardon

Pardon me, ſir! I am too prolix — I encroach too much on your patience: — I have reaſons for being particular, which you ſhall not long remain unacquainted with.

" Madam — madam — madam — I — I — I —"

This man, Sir William, this Mr. Stanley, from the wantonneſs of cruelty, ſpared no pains to make himſelf maſter of my friend's affections. — I would ſay that he ſucceeded — I would ſay that.

—" For heaven's ſake, madam, do you intend this affair ſhould touch me?"

Yes, ſir, I mean that it ſhould touch you with compaſſion. --- I muſt ſee Mr. Stanley, who, when he cruelly forſook my friend, went to Rome, as he ſaid, to be preſent at the carnival. --- You have told me, ſir, you know nothing of him, but I hope, if you

you are ſincerely moved at the ſtory of the lady, from whom he took a moſt valuable heart, under pretence of giving her his own in exchange, I ſay you will then be aiding to the only event which can now give me pleaſure: ſuch a man as Mr. Stanley, is not, I ſhould think, difficult to be found out: --- if you are the man I take you to be, Sir William, it is by your means I hope to ſee him under this roof --- to ſee him at the feet of his forſaken miſtreſs, and hear him ſeverely regret his infidelity.

Oh, my dear Lady Anne, how ſweetly did I enjoy his confuſion! --- --- I waited a moment for his reply, but finding him diſinclined, or perhaps unable to make one, thus I proceeded: ---

My friend is the moſt beautiful, and at this time the moſt happy of women. --- Though her birth ſeemed obſcure, her fortune contracted, when Mr. Stanley left her in France, yet now

now ſhe is rejoicing on the favour and affection of a father, who can raiſe her to ſuch high honours that very few dare look up to her with hope.

The mercenary wretch took my words, not as I meant, but as I intended he ſhould take them, and I could perceive he already fancied himſelf a ſharer in her exalted fortune. --- I hope, in the end, his expectations will not be diſappointed: --- guilty as I hold him, I would not wiſh his puniſhment extended beyond this life. --- I ſaw him wrapt in thought — I gueſſed the ſubject of his meditation, and continued ſpeaking to this purpoſe: —

I have told you, Sir William, the envied ſituation to which my friend is exalted, now what I have further to ſay is this — If by any means you can oblige me in finding out her lover, the paſſion which I know ſhe formerly entertained for him has made me determine to try at bring-

ing

ing them once more together, tho', if I ſhould be ſucceſsful in procuring this interview, I cannot promiſe him ſhe will receive his vindication, or that ſhe will not be deaf to his intreaties.

I had him at my feet before I ſcarce finiſhed the laſt ſentence. — Oh, how I gloried in his proſtrate humiliation! — how his confeſſion delighted me!

"Behold, madam (cried he) in the unfortunate Lovedale, a wretch deſerving your pity! — The man who did love, who ſtill loves your charming friend, thus ſues to be reunited to her: — that very man, in whoſe favour you generouſly ſaid you would exert yourſelf, he it is that now intreats your intereſt. — Ah, madam, turn not your eyes from the wretched, yet not the very guilty Stanley you believe him!"

You Mr. Stanley! (affecting a look of aſtoniſhment) — You, can you be

Mr.

Mr. Stanley? --- You are diſpoſed to jeſt, Sir William. --- Is it poſſible you can be Mr. Stanley?

"I confeſs, madam (riſing from his humble poſture with an aſſumed air of compoſure) you have reaſon to doubt the reality of my aſſertion. --- I ſee it will be neceſſary to unravel this myſtery, and if I am not abſolutely acquitted, ſo I hope your juſtice will not abſolutely condemn me."

The man's aſſurance ſtartled me.--- I made no return but by a ſlight inclination of my head.---Whilſt he confidently went on to vindicate his innocence, nothing but the thoughts of a future ſcene would have made me liſten with any degree of patience.

"I have been taxed, madam, in the perſon of Mr. Stanley, as a man without generoſity, without ſentiment, without one principle of honour. — I confeſs I am precipitate, warm, indiſcreet (follies too often in-

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cident to youth) but from the other imputations I will, with your permiſſion, madam, try to diſentangle myſelf."

Again I bowed.

"That I may not take up your attention, by repeating incidents with which you are already acquainted, give me leave to aſk you, madam, how much of my behaviour you are acquainted with, regarding my acquaintance with Miſs Drax, for I preſume it is that lady you make happy in the title of your friend?"

Indeed, Sir William, her friendſhip I glory in.—I have been honoured in her confidence, and believe I am no ſtranger to any part of that tranſaction upon which we are now entered:—your motives for a procedure (ſo diſhonourable I will not call it, as you ſay you can wipe off that imputation, but allow me to give it the appellations of dark and myſterious) theſe alone remain unexplained.—Perhaps, ſir, I take too great freedom,

freedom, in betraying a hint of being admitted to ſhare a ſecret which concerns only yourſelf?

Shall I tell you the truth, my dear Lady Anne?—I wiſhed to put his ingenuity to the teſt—I wiſhed to hear him defend an action, which, in the language of truth, I knew would be defenceleſs—nor did the arguments he advanced ſerve to ſtagger my opinion.

"My conduct, madam (ſaid he) has been myſterious—my motives for that myſtery ſhall not be concealed:—on your own account you have a right to command them—on account of your beloved friend I will reveal them freely.—I throw myſelf on your mercy—I depend on your great goodneſs to plead for me with my angel.—Permit me, madam, to aſſure you, that, next to Miſs Drax, you, of all your whole ſex, would have been my ambitious choice, if, by my tender aſſiduities, I could have prevailed on you to reward my paſſion."

Was ever a more artful inſinuation!—You know, my lady, how far he has carried his gallantry towards me: no doubt he thought it required an apology, otherwiſe what opinion could I have of his ſincerity, how plead for him with his angel.---Happy Lucy, to have diſcovered his unworthy principles, to have withdrawn your eſteem from him, before you ſuffered the fate of my poor Sophia!

I bluſhed---I could not avoid bluſhing---I believe he did not diſtinguiſh the fluſh of anger from the glow of a ſofter paſſion---I am ſure he did not, for the audacious wretch looked at me, as if he pitied my emotion and proceeded ſighing.

"It was after the death of my father, madam, that I went to France, fond of diſſipating my concern on that occaſion—there I ſaw Miſs Drax—I ſaw her at the ambaſſador's chapel, I need not tell you ſhe is lovely---I gazed inceſſantly on her charms, and became a cap-

a captive to them---ordered a ſervant to follow her, he did, and, on the ſtricteſt enquiries, I found out the character and ſituation of her mother. --- I preſume, madam, you are acquainted with Mrs. Drax."

I am, ſir---pray go on.

"I have told you, madam, that I am warm, precipitate, indiſcreet. — Without conſidering the conſequence of ſuch a ſtep, I got admittance to their houſe, and never conceal'd, or attempted to conceal, my affection for the young lady, which increaſed every moment I beheld her."---

Pray, ſir, permit me to aſk why you thought proper to drop the name of Lovedale, and aſſume that of Stanley.

"This is one of the indiſcretions, madam, I have to tax myſelf with, but the violence of my paſſion will, I hope, in ſome meaſure excuſe it:— my title I knew would be a bar to my enjoying her company and converſation

verſation on the footing I deſired, which though perfectly innocent, I wiſhed to be without reſtraint."

And did you at that time, ſir, really intend to marry Miſs Drax?

"My affairs were ſo unhappily ſituated, madam, that when I firſt knew her, I could not abſolutely determine how to act, but ſince my return to England, I have been often tempted to go again to France, and offer her my hand.—Tell her this, my dear mediatrix—tell her this, I beſeech you."

But if I am to judge any thing from appearances, ſir, theſe thoughts were entirely laid aſide.

"Curſed fortune, madam—I told you my affairs were unſettled, I could not abſolutely conclude on ſuch a ſtep without deliberation—every man has a character of prudence to ſupport."

And I preſume, ſir, it was in ſupport of this prudential character, that

that you withdrew from France, pretending to go to the Carnival;—and my eyes flaſhed indignation on the conſcious wretch.

"I confeſs, madam, you are right —I had friends in France — they ſaw my whole ſoul was engaged to Miſs Drax, and obliged me to quit a kingdom where I was every hour in danger of being ſurpriſed by my paſſion, which they made appear not only prejudicial to my own intereſt, but highly injurious to the lady. — And now, moſt amiable woman, againſt caſting himſelf at my feet, let me conjure you no longer to think me ungenerous, without a ſentiment, or diveſted of honourable principles. —I adore your charming friend.— I would die to be admitted to her preſence, and my affairs are now ſo well ſettled, that if ſhe can be prevailed upon to ſeal my pardon, her father, though he ſhould be the firſt peer on earth, will not, I flatter myſelf refuſe me his alliance. — For God's ſake, madam condeſcend to intreat for me.

I cannot

I cannot promiſe to intercede for you, Sir William, but if you deſire it I will immediately bring you to her preſence.

He was mad with joy — he made me a thouſand acknowledgments— my heart flutter'd—my eyes grew dim at thoughts of the approaching ſcene—I held out my right hand in ſilence — tears ſtreamed down my averted face — I drew him to a door which led to another apartment—I threw it open, where, ſmiling in death, lay the beautiful remains of Sophia, reſted on a ſable couch in a ſhroud of white ſattin.

Great God! the ſight I had prepared for her murtherer was too much for the tendereſt of her friends. —I wonder how any of my faculties performed their office.—Nothing but the excruciating agonies of her deſtroyer could have ſupported me.—My greedy eyes ſwallowed his tears as they yielded up their own :—my ears were glutted with his groans, and, when he threw himſelf on the floor, I cried

out

out in the bitterneſs of woe, Lie there, guilty ſavage, till thy remorſe has rendered thee an object of divine mercy! The wrongs of my Sophia, the wrongs of Lucy muſt firſt be ſatisfied!

He heard me not—he bounded from the floor, and franticly ran towards Sophia; but I, with an air almoſt as frantic, intercepted him, and puſhing him back with my hand, Off! off! (ſaid I) a murderer's touch ſhall not pollute the lovely body of my friend!

Rage, deſpair and ſhame ſtopped the paſſage of his words—He darted a terrying look of menace; but to me nothing was now terrifying.—He fled from the room—he flew from the houſe.—My vengeance was compleat:—I did not attempt to withhold him.

I muſt now lay down my pen—I muſt now give myſelf the full enjoyment of ſorrow.

I take it up once more, my dear Lady Anne, to tell you I ſhall very ſoon

ſoon retire from this houſe, where I have lately ſeen ſo many ſucceſſive ſcenes of woe.—I ſhould have joined my family in London, but having prevailed on the more than parent of my dear departed Sophia (her diſtracted, inconſolable Hannah) to go to my father's houſe, thither I am reſolved to attend her.—Whilſt I live I will be attentive to the eaſe and happineſs of this good creature:—ſhe ſhall not ſink into her grave (to which ſhe now ſeems bending) with affliction, if the hand of tenderneſs I hold out for her acceptance can keep her back.

—Adieu, my deareſt friend, my amiable Lady Anne!—To-morrow the remains of my Sophia are to be depoſited, by her own orders, in the moſt private manner.---No marble will ſpeak her worth---no weeping angels ſupport her monument:---in my breaſt I will raiſe a laſting one to her dear memory, with this inſcription---Sacred to Friendſhip.

FINIS.